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HAMLET

SHAKESPEARE'S STORIES

SIMPLY TOLD.

BY

Mary Seymour.

TRAGEDIES AND HISTORIES

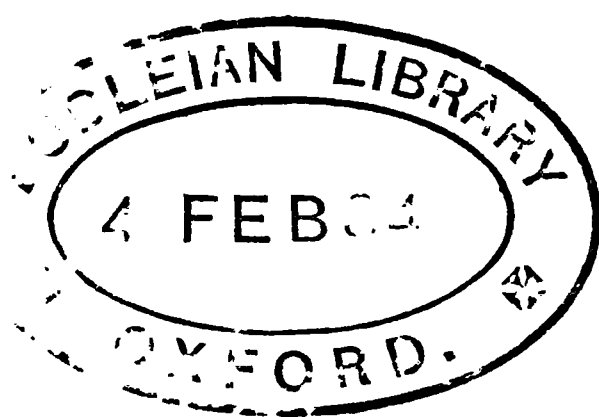
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Preface.

ALTHOUGH the stories of many of Shakespeare's plays were ably told by a writer of a long-past day, the favourable reception accorded to a simpler rendering of them has proved that it was not unnecessary to produce a volume suitable to the youngest readers of these later times.

A new edition is now offered to English children in two companion volumes, of which the one is devoted mainly to the Comedies, and the other to the Tragedies and the Historical Plays, of the great Dramatist. It will be noticed that no more than an outline of the story has been given in each case. The appreciation of the Plays themselves, and of their detailed beauties, belongs to more mature years; but that will not be the less keen because the appetite has been whetted and the curiosity aroused in early youth.

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I.

CORIO LANUS.



THE streets of Rome were filled with rebellious citizens, who, armed with clubs and staves, shouted their angry threats against the patricians. It was a time of scarcity and famine, and the grievance of the common people was that the store-houses of the rich were filled with grain while they were left to starve, and that the laws of the state were oppressive. Caius Marcius was he whom these angry people denounced as their chief enemy, and they declared that they would kill him; but in the midst of the tumult the voice of one who had been a friend to the citizens was heard, asking what business was on hand for which so many weapons were needed.

It was Menenius Agrippa; and at sight of him there was a lull in the tumult, so that he could speak to these enraged men. At first he told them they were wrong in supposing the patricians were their enemies; and as for the dearth, it was not of their causing. But such words as these had no effect on them; and again the rough voices were raised with the cry, "Care for us! They ne'er cared for us yet."

Then Menenius Agrippa began to liken the members of the state to the different members of the human frame, which, he said, could not be independent one of another any more than could patricians dispense with plebeians, or plebeians with patricians; and while he still talked with them, Caius Marcius appeared in their midst, exclaiming,—

" At sight of him there was a lull in the tumult "

" What's the matter,
That in these several places of the city
You cry against the noble senate, who,
Under the gods, keep you in awe, which else
Would feed on one another ? "

But he brought also the tidings that one of their requests was granted, and that five tribunes were to be elected by their own

choice to defend their rights, one of whom was Junius Brutus. Marcius, however, declared that never should the "rabble" have so prevailed with him, and that this would be but the introduction of other insurrections.

While he thus spoke, news was brought that the Volscians had taken up arms, led by one Tullus Aufidius, of whom Marcius said,—

"He is a lion
That I am proud to hunt."

In the Volscian town of Corioli the senators were assembled to discuss the manner in which the Romans had received the tidings of their preparations for war. One of them exclaimed,—

"Our army's in the field :
We never yet made doubt but Rome was ready
To answer us."

Another added,—

"Noble Aufidius,
Take your commission ; hie you to your bands ;
Let us alone to guard Corioli.
If they set down before's, for the remove
Bring up your army ; but, I think, you'll find
They've not prepared for us."

Virgilia, the wife of Marcius, was filled with sorrow and fear at the prospect of the war ; but his mother, Volumnia, sought to instil into her some of her own courage, and she said : " When yet he was but tender-bodied, and the only son of my womb ; when youth with comeliness plucked all gaze his way ; when for a day of kings' entreaties a mother should not sell him an hour from

her beholding ; I, considering how honour would become such a person, that it was no better than picture-like to hang by the wall, if renown made it not stir, was pleased to let him seek danger where he was like to find fame. To a cruel war I sent him ; from whence he returned, his brows bound with oak."

Virgilia here asked how it would have been had Marcius died instead of returning victorious ; and Volumnia said she would have prized his renown as a son, and that she would rather, had she a dozen sons, that eleven should die nobly for their country than that one should live in softness and luxury.

Presently another Roman lady came to the dwelling of Marcius. Her name was Valeria, and being Virgilia's friend, she sought to persuade her to go out with her.

"I'll not over the threshold till my lord return from the wars," said Virgilia.

"Go with me ; and I'll tell you excellent news of your husband," was Valeria's reply. But this news was only that Marcius had been sent with his troops to Corioli, accompanied by Titus Lartius, and there was no doubt that the Volscians would be subdued and the war quickly ended. However, it was impossible to raise the spirits of the sorrowful lady ; and she remained in her home with an anxious and desponding heart.

There was desperate fighting on either side, and the Romans were beaten back to their trenches ; but Marcius led them forward, and this time the Volscians were driven into Corioli, pursued within the very gates by the brave commander.

Not one of his men was by him, the gates were shut behind his back, and he was alone with the enemy ; and yet, single-

handed, Marcius kept the Volscians at bay, and thus let in the Roman army to the town, which they ransacked.

When the Romans were gathered in their camp, after a retreat was sounded, and began to extol the courage of Marcius, he said,—

“ Pray now, no more : my mother,
Who has a charter to extol her blood,

“ He was alone with the enemy.”

When she does praise me grieves me. I have done
As you have done,—that’s what I can ; induced
As you have been,—that’s for my country :
He that has but effected his good will
Hath overta’en mine act.”

The Roman general, Cominius, would not pass over such brave

achievements in silence ; and he declared that a tenth part of the spoil taken from Corioli was to be the reward.

“ I thank you, general ;
But cannot make my heart consent to take
A bribe to pay my sword : I do refuse it ;
And stand upon my common part with those
That have beheld the doing ”—

was the reply of Marcius ; whereat the soldiers made the air resound with his name, and waved their caps and lances.

Cominius then said he was too modest, but that he would choose another form of recompense for his great service to the state.

“ Be it known,
As to us, to all the world, that Caius Marcius
Wears this war’s garland : in token of the which,
My noble steed, known to the camp, I give him,
With all his trim belonging ; and from this time,
For what he did before Corioli, call him,
With all the applause and clamour of the host,
CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS !—Bear
The addition nobly ever ! ”

Great was the rejoicing when this news reached the city of Rome, and great numbers of its people went out to meet the victor, who was crowned with a wreath of oak leaves, and accompanied by every mark of honour.

Volumnia, his mother, gloried even in the wounds he had received ; but Virgilia wept, and Coriolanus said to her,—

“ Wouldst thou have laughed had I come confined home,
That weep’st to see me triumph? Ah, my dear,
Such eyes the widows in Corioli wear,
And mothers that lack sons.”

After this, the senate elected Coriolanus consul; but it was first necessary that he should obtain the votes of the common people, and many of these had never liked him. It went sorely against the will of the proud Roman to have thus to seek the favour of those beneath himself in rank; but he reflected,—

“ Custom calls me to’t :—
What custom wills, in all things should we do’t,
The dust on antique time would lie unswept,
And mountainous error be too highly heapt
For truth to o’er-peer.”

However, the triumph he had achieved won him the majority of the votes, and the choice of the senate was thus confirmed; but the tribunes Sicinius and Brutus were not well pleased, and accused the people of weakness and childishness in being persuaded by the words of a man who had never been their friend. They also urged the citizens to reverse their choice at the public election, and lay the fault upon their tribunes.

“ Say we read lectures to you,
How youngly he began to serve his country,
How long continued ”—

exclaimed Brutus; and seeing that his words were making some impression, he went on :—

“ Say you ne’er had done’t—
Harp on that still—but by our putting on :
And presently, when you have drawn your number,
Repair to the Capitol.”

Having thus incited their hearers to rebel against their rulers, Brutus and Sicinius themselves sought Coriolanus, and told him it would be dangerous to proceed further in the business of his election.

The patrician Cominius exclaimed angrily,—

“ Hath he not passed the noble and the common ? ”

Brutus answered that the people were incensed against him ; and reminded Coriolanus that, but a short time before, he had been unwilling for corn to be given them in their distress.

Coriolanus declared that what he had felt and what he had said then he would now repeat,—that soothing these restive and troublesome commoners was but nourishing the seeds of insolence and rebellion against the senate.

Then Brutus cried,—

“ Why, shall the people give
One that speaks thus their voice ? ”

And Sicinius added,—

“ ’Has spoken like a traitor, and shall answer
As traitors do.”

Here a crowd of infuriated people broke in, crying, “ Down with him ! ” but Sicinius called on them for peace, and as he was one of their own tribunes, they permitted him to speak to them.

He would not use the name of Coriolanus, which had been given in triumphant reward, but called the newly-named consul by his familiar title of Marcius.

“ You are at point to lose your liberties :
Marcius would have all from you ; Marcius,
Whom late you have named for consul.”

Brutus here interposed, saying that by unanimous consent he and others had been chosen as the tribunes of the people, and that they should uphold their own authority.

“ We do here pronounce,
Upon the part o’ the people, in whose power
We were elected theirs, Marcius is worthy
Of present death.”

Excited to fury, the citizens would have fallen upon Coriolanus, and bearing him to the Tarpeian rock, have cast him thence after the manner of a criminal ; but he drew his sword in self-defence, and the other senators besought him to retire to his own house until the violence of popular feeling was calmed.

There Coriolanus still declared that he would not disguise his true sentiments for the sake of winning favour ; and when his mother, Volumnia, urged him to such a course, he cried,—

“ Why did you wish me milder ? would you have me
False to my nature ? Rather say I play
The man I am.”

Presently the senators sought him, begging him to return to the market-place of the city and amend what he had there said.

As Coriolanus still refused to feign sentiments which he did not truly hold, Volumnia began to entreat him to go and speak soothingly to the angry citizens, for by so doing he would afterwards gain a complete power over them. At length, after much urging, Coriolanus said,—

"Look, I am going :
Commend me to my wife. I'll return consul ;
Or never trust to what my tongue can do
I' the way of flattery further."

Arrived in the Forum, he was asked if he were content to submit to the voice of the people, and he answered that he was ; upon which his friend Menenius bade the citizens think how brave a soldier Coriolanus had proved himself, and that, if his words were rough, they were such as became a soldier.

Then the tribune Sicinius brought forward this charge against him,—

"You have contrived to take
From Rome all seasoned office, and to wind
Yourself into a power tyrannical ;
For which you are a traitor to the people."

The word *traitor* roused the indignation of Coriolanus, and he broke forth into a storm of angry words, which renewed the popular dislike to him, and again there rose the cry,—

"To the rock, to the rock with him !"

But Sicinius said that it would be better to banish him from the city ; and he, as tribune, pronounced upon him that sentence in the name of the people. In vain did the other senators who

were the friends of Coriolanus try to speak ; the common people would not listen to a word, but shouted,—

“ He’s banished, and it shall be so.”

Then did the proud soldier, with scorn in every feature of his face, and still greater scorn breathing in his every word, declare that from henceforth he would leave them to their foes ; and that never again would he attempt to deliver them from an enemy : thus saying, he departed from the city.

Bitterly did the mother and the wife of Coriolanus mourn at the disgrace which had overtaken him ; but he sought to cheer them, and cried,—

“ Nay, mother,
Where is your ancient courage ? you were used
To say extremity was the trier of spirits ;
That common chances common men could bear ;
That when the sea was calm all boats alike
Showed mastership in floating ; Fortune’s blows,
When most struck home, being gentle wounded, craves
A noble cunning ; you were used to load me
With precepts that would make invincible
The heart that conned them.”

Some of his friends declared they would follow him into exile ; but Coriolanus bade them all farewell :—

“ Come, my sweet wife, my dearest mother, and
My friends of noble touch ; when I am forth,
Bid me farewell, and smile. I pray you, come.
While I remain above the ground, you shall

Hear from me still ; and never of me aught
But what is like me formerly."

Making his way to Antium, Coriolanus sought the dwelling of Aufidius, his former enemy, so well disguised in mean apparel that none could have recognized him. As he approached the house to which he had been directed, he mused upon the turns and changes which take place in the world, so that friends become



" Bid me farewell, and smile."

sometimes the bitterest foes. When admitted to the presence of Aufidius and asked his name, Coriolanus said it was one unmusical to Volscian ears—even that of Caius Marcius, who had wrought them so much ill, yet who now was willing to fight with them against his ungrateful countrymen.

Aufidius was deeply moved by his words, and declared that

even had he no other quarrel against Rome, he should be ready to war with the city for their treatment of so noble a defender; and professing a sincere friendship, bade him "a thousand welcomes."

The good news travelled apace in the city, and the Volscians rejoiced at their certain victory over their enemy, now they had so brave a soldier on their side.



"None would have recognized him."

When the Romans heard that Aufidius, joined by Marcius, was leading a powerful force against their city, every heart was filled with consternation.

"He will shake
Your Rome about your ears"—

was the cry of the senators to the tribunes who had caused this

misfortune; and Menenius exclaimed that they were all undone unless Coriolanus, being noble of heart, would show some mercy.

The fickle citizens now declared that when they consented to his banishment it was against their will; but Sicinius and Brutus strove to quiet them by declaring that the news was not true, and that they had better disperse to their homes and cast aside all fear.

Meanwhile some of the patrician lords went forth from Rome towards the spot where Coriolanus was encamped, and kneeling, begged his clemency, yet in vain. One of them bade him think of those in the city who were still his friends; but he answered that for "one poor grain or two" he could not leave the whole unburned.

Then Menenius Agrippa, whom he had formerly loved well, was despatched to plead with Coriolanus, to bid him think of his child, his mother, his wife; but he was quickly dismissed.

"Be gone.

Mine ears against your suits are stronger than
Your gates against my force"—

was the only answer which could be won from him who had formerly done so much for his country.

One more effort did the Romans make to appease the anger of Coriolanus, and that was by sending Virgilia to his camp dressed in mourning, and leading their young son by the hand. "My lord and husband," she cried. But the voice was stern which answered her,—

"These eyes are not the same I wore in Rome."

Presently, however, Coriolanus softened a little in his manner; yet bade her not ask him to forgive the Romans. He knelt to his aged mother, too, and sought her blessing, but she fell on her knees before him, to plead for mercy on the city of his birth; and though he long maintained his firmness, Coriolanus was touched at last, and, taking her hands in his, cried, "O mother, mother! what



"These eyes are not the same I wore in Rome."

have you done?" Then turning to his companion in arms, he said,—

"Aufidius, though I cannot make true wars,
I'll frame convenient peace. Now, good Aufidius,
Were you in my stead, would you have heard
A mother less? or granted less, Aufidius?"

The Volscian general owned that he had felt himself moved;

and then Volumnia, Virgilia, and their companions were bidden to enter the tent and rest, while some message of peace was devised for them to carry back to Rome.

Menenius and the tribune Sicinius were anticipating small success from this fresh appeal to Coriolanus; but as they talked together a messenger approached to tell that the ladies had prevailed; that the Volscians had retired, and Marcius with them; and that—

“A merrier day did never yet greet Rome,
No, not the expulsion of the Tarquins.”

Shouts of joy now rent the air: trumpets, hautboys, and drums were heard; and both patricians and plebeians went to meet and welcome Volumnia and the other ladies.

A different scene was taking place at Antium; for there Aufidius was denouncing Coriolanus as a traitor to the Volscians, won by the tears of women to deprive them of their expected triumph over Rome.

As he approached to state the honourable terms upon which he had concluded a peace, he was called by the name *Marcus*; and repeating it as if in surprise, Aufidius thus answered him:—

“Ay, Marcus, Caius Marcus: dost thou think
I'll grace thee with that robbery, thy stol'n name,—
Coriolanus in Corioli?
You lords and heads o' the state, perfidiously
He has betrayed your business, and given up,
For certain drops of salt, your city Rome,—
I say 'your city,'—to his wife and mother.”

A tumult ensued, in which several voices cried, "Let him die for it!" and Aufidius, with others who were in his confidence, and knew of his jealous dislike to his Roman rival, drew their swords, one of which pierced the heart of Coriolanus, and he fell lifeless on the ground.

"Thou hast done a deed whereat valour will weep"—

"A tumult ensued."

exclaimed one of the lords, turning to Aufidius. And another added,—

"Bear from hence his body :
And mourn you for him : let him be regarded
As the most noble corse that ever herald
Did follow to his urn."

A sudden regret for his rashness now filled the heart of

Aufidius, and he helped to bear away the form of the dead Roman, saying, as he raised it from the earth where it had fallen,—

“ Though in this city he
Hath widowed and unchilded many a one,
Which to this hour bewail the injury,
Yet he shall have a noble memory.”

II.

JULIUS CAESAR.



VAST crowd thronged the streets of Rome, waiting for a sight of Cæsar, who was to make his triumphal entry into the city on the day after his defeat of Pompey. The tribunes Flavius and Marullus were ill-pleased to see the general rejoicing, and Marullus cried in his indignation,—

“ You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things !
O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome,
Knew you not Pompey ? Many a time and oft
Have you climbed up to walls and battlements,
To towers and windows, yea, to chimney-tops,
Your infants in your arms, and there have sat
The live-long day, with patient expectation,
To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome :
And when you saw his chariot but appear,
Have you not made an universal shout,
That Tiber trembled underneath her banks,
To hear the replication of your sounds
Made in her concave shores ?
And do you now put on your best attire ?
And do you now cull out a holiday ?

And do you now strew flowers in his way
That comes in triumph over Pompey's blood?"

Presently the sound of music proclaimed the approach of the great conqueror, with Antony, Cicero, Brutus, and others in his company; followed by a concourse of people, among whom was a soothsayer. Calpurnia, the wife of Cæsar, too was there; and Portia, wife to Brutus; and other noble ladies attending on them. Great was the noise; but amidst it the ear of Cæsar caught the sound of his own name, and commanding silence, he exclaimed,—

"Who is it in the press that calls on me?
I hear a tongue, shriller than all the music,
Cry 'Cæsar!' Speak; Cæsar is turned to hear."

It was the soothsayer who had uttered the name, and who now said, "Beware the ides of March."

Inquiring who it was that thus addressed him, Cæsar had the man brought forward, and bade him repeat once more what he had to say.

"Beware the ides of March," repeated the soothsayer; but the procession passed on, deeming his words unworthy of notice.

It was the feast of Lupercalia they were celebrating, and many sports were going on; but Brutus would not view them when Cassius pressed him to do so: for, said he,—

"I am not gamesome: I do lack some part
Of that quick spirit that is in Antony."

They were talking together, when a noise of shouting was heard, and Brutus said he feared the people must be choosing

Cæsar for their king. Cassius asked him if he wished it might not be so, whereupon Brutus answered,—

“I would not, Cassius ; yet I love him well.”

But he felt sure that there was some reason for Cassius seeking to detain him apart from the rest, and begged that he

“Cassius disclosed his secret jealousy of Cæsar.”

might hear it. Thus urged, Cassius disclosed his secret jealousy of Cæsar.

“What should be in that ‘Cæsar’?

Why should that name be sounded more than yours?
Write them together, yours is as fair a name ;
Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well ;
Weigh them, it is as heavy ; conjure with ‘em,
Brutus will start a spirit as soon as Cæsar.”

Brutus confessed that he too had sometimes thought like this, and would now consider what Cassius had been saying; but their conversation was checked by the reappearance of Cæsar and his train, for the games were ended.

Brutus noticed an angry flush upon the brow of the great conqueror, while his wife Calpurnia's cheek was undoubtedly pale, and he felt convinced that something was amiss.

At the same time Cæsar was looking suspiciously at Cassius, and calling Antony to him, declared he was a man who thought too much, and such men were dangerous.

“Fear him not, Cæsar, he's not dangerous;
He is a noble Roman, and well given”—

was Antony's reply; to which Cæsar answered that he had no fear, but that

“If my name were liable to fear,
I do not know the man I should avoid
So soon as that spare Cassius. He reads much;
He is a great observer, and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men; he loves no plays,
As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music;
Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort
As if he mocked himself, and scorned his spirit
That could be moved to smile at any thing.
Such men as he be never at heart's ease
Whiles they behold a greater than themselves,
And therefore are they very dangerous.”

As he passed out, Brutus pulled Casca by the cloak, and asked him why Cæsar looked so sad.

“Why, there was a crown offered him,” said Casca; “and

being offered him, he put it by with the back of his hand, thus; and then the people fell a-shouting."

"What was the second noise for?" asked Brutus.

"Why, for that too;" and Casca went on to tell that three times had the crown been offered, yet three times had Cæsar put it from him, and as he did so a fresh shout was raised.

Cassius hearing all this, kept it carefully in his mind, and went to his home resolved to fan the little flame of envy he had discovered existing in the breast of Brutus. He meant to throw in at his window several papers, which should appear to come from different people, yet all containing some expression of their high esteem of his name, and some hint at the ambition of Cæsar.

Not long after this the people of Rome were alarmed by violent thunder, and strangely vivid lightning, and so disturbed a sky that—in their superstition—they believed some terrible event was coming.

"Who ever knew the heavens menace so?" said Casca, meeting with Cassius; who replied that he had walked about the streets without fear of the lightning's flash. Casca presently told him that on the morrow the senators meant to establish Cæsar as a king, and—save there in Italy—he should wear his crown in every place by sea and land.

"I know where I will wear this dagger, then," said Cassius; and so thoroughly did he rouse his companion to a share in his own feelings, that a bargain was soon made between them to aim at gaining redress for their many grievances; and first of all they must win Brutus wholly to be on their side.

As night came on Brutus was unable to sleep, for the sugges-

tions Cassius had made that day disturbed him ; and presently he called his servant Lucius to light him a taper in his study.

“ Is not to-morrow, boy, the ides of March ? ”

he asked ; and when Lucius said he did not know, he was bidden to look in the calendar and bring word. While getting the light this lad found a sealed paper, which he brought to his master, and Brutus opening it, read as follows :—

“ Brutus, thou sleep'st : awake, and see thyself.
Shall Rome, &c. Speak, strike, redress !
Brutus, thou sleep'st : awake ! ”

Thinking over these strange words, he murmured,—

“ Am I entreated
To speak and strike ? O Rome, I make thee promise ;
If the redress will follow, thou receivest
Thy full petition at the hand of Brutus. ”

Just then there was a sound of knocking at the gate, and Lucius brought word that it was Cassius and some others, who sought an interview with his master.

“ Do we trouble you ? ” said Cassius, entering. Brutus answered that he had been up an hour, and then inquired if he knew the rest of his visitors.

“ Yes, every man of them, and no man here
But honours you ; and every one doth wish
You had but that opinion of yourself
Which every noble Roman bears of you. ”

Then he introduced his companions by name separately.

Forthwith they began to make their plans for killing Cæsar, and some desired the life of his chief friend, Mark Antony, but Brutus would not agree to this.

When at length Cassius and his party were gone, promising to act their part like brave Romans, Brutus looked at his young



"It was Cassius and some others, who sought an interview."

servant, who had fallen asleep while waiting their departure. Almost envying the boy such undisturbed repose, he said,—

"Enjoy the honey-heavy dew of slumber :
Thou hast no figures nor no fantasies,
Which busy care draws in the brains of men ;
Therefore thou sleep'st so sound."

As he stood there his wife, Portia, came to seek him, for she thought something must be wrong; besides she had observed at

supper-time that his mind seemed full of anxious care ; and now she said,—

“ Dear my lord,
Make me acquainted with your cause of grief.”

Brutus answered that he was not well in health. However, Portia knew this was but an excuse to silence her inquiries, and she besought him again to confide in her.

“ I grant I am a woman ; but withal
A woman that Lord Brutus took to wife :
I grant I am a woman ; but withal
A woman well-reputed, Cato’s daughter.
Think you I am no stronger than my sex,
Being so fathered and so husbanded ?
Tell me your counsels, I will not disclose ’em :
I have made strong proof of my constancy.”

Just then there was a sound of knocking, and Brutus, hearing it, bade Portia leave him, promising that by-and-by she should learn the cause of his uneasiness.

The new comers proved to be two more noble Romans ready to lend themselves to the conspiracy against Cæsar, and one of them said,—

“ With a heart new-fired I follow you,
To do I know not what : but it sufficeth
That Brutus leads me on.”

In Cæsar’s palace there was some disquietude ; for his wife, Calpurnia, was filled with presentiments of evil, and as day dawned she begged him not to go out into the city.

Cæsar ridiculed such fears ; and when Calpurnia told him

that comets had been seen in the sky, that ghostly shrieks had been uttered in the streets, and other such supposed warnings had been given, he said,—

“Cowards die many times before their deaths ;
The valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear ;

“ She begged him not to go out into the city.

Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come.”

But though his courage was great, he sent to inquire what the augurs said regarding him ; and when they bade him not stir forth that day, he suffered his wife to persuade him to let Mark

Antony go to the senate-house and say he was not well enough to be present.

At that moment a Roman named Decius came in, to whom Cæsar said,—

“ And you are come in very happy time,
To bear my greeting to the senators,
And tell them that I will not come to-day :
Cannot, is false ; and that I dare not, falser :
I will not come to-day :—tell them so, Decius.”

Calpurnia here interposed, and bade Decius say that her husband was sick. But he would not permit such an excuse to be made for him, and cried,—

“ Shall Cæsar send a lie ?
Have I in conquest stretched mine arm so far,
To be afeard to tell graybeards the truth ?
Decius, go tell them Cæsar will not come.”

Then Decius begged him to assign some reason for not going to the senate-house ; for he said it would scarcely do if one of the lords should whisper that their meeting must be broken up till Cæsar's wife had better dreams, or that “ Cæsar is afraid.”

Then Cæsar exclaimed,—

“ How foolish do your fears seem now, Calpurnia !
I am ashamed I did yield to them.—
Give me my robe, for I will go.”

A party of the conspirators now appeared, seeking to accompany Cæsar to the senate.

In a street near the Capitol there stood a man named Artemi-

dorus, who had obtained some knowledge of the plot against Cæsar's life, and who held in his hand a paper upon which he had written this warning:—

“Cæsar, beware of Brutus; take heed of Cassius; come not near Casca; have an eye to Cinna; trust not Trebonius; mark well Metellus Cimber: Decius Brutus loves thee not: thou hast

“Give me my robe, for I will go.”

wronged Caius Ligarius. There is but one mind in all these men, and it is bent against Cæsar. If thou beest not immortal, look about you: security gives way to conspiracy. The mighty gods defend thee! Thy lover,

ARTEMIDORUS.”

Having taken his stand in the way along which Cæsar had to

pass, he resolved to hand this paper to him as if it had been some petition; there was a chance that he might open it, and so save his life.

Left alone in her home, Portia, the wife of Brutus, seemed strangely disturbed. At length she called the boy Lucius to her, and bade him run to the Capitol and bring word if his master looked well, and what Cæsar was doing.

The soothsayer who, at the festival of Lupercalia, had bidden Cæsar "beware of the ides of March," now appeared before the house of Brutus, and Portia asked what he had been doing. He then told her that he was going to see Cæsar pass to the Capitol, for he meant to ask him to befriend himself.

A great crowd had assembled; among whom were Artemidorus and the soothsayer, who both pressed Cæsar to read their papers as he passed by. But the conspirators also had arranged that one of their number should have ready a petition, and entreat that it might be read first.

"O Cæsar, read mine first; for mine's a suit
That touches Cæsar nearer: read it, great Cæsar"—

was the cry of Artemidorus. But Cæsar declared that the business touching himself must be last served; and so entered the Capitol with the warning unread.

When all the senators were seated, and the business of the State began, one after another of the conspirators rose, and kneeling before Cæsar, asked some petition of him; and when thus gathered round his person, it had been arranged that Casca should suddenly stab him in the neck. As he did this, Cæsar caught him

by the arm ; but the others then thrust him through with their daggers ; and last of all Brutus, upon whom Cæsar turned a glance of wondering reproach, and, exclaiming, " Et tu, Brute ! " expired.

A great confusion ensued ; amid which Cinna bade some one run and proclaim aloud in the streets—" Liberty ! Freedom ! Tyranny is dead ! "

" The others thrust him through with their daggers."

Brutus was anxious now to secure the friendship of Mark Antony, who had been a great ally of Cæsar ; and sent to beg him to come back from his house, to which he had fled, promising that no harm should be done him.

When Antony appeared, he said that if there was any scheme to procure his death, there was nowhere he would rather die than by the side of Cæsar. To which Brutus answered :—

“O Antony, beg not your death of us.
Though now we must appear bloody and cruel,
As, by our hands, and this our present act,
You see we do ; yet see you but our hands,
And this the bleeding business they have done.
Our hearts you see not ; they are pitiful ;
And pity to the general wrong of Rome—
As fire drives out fire, so pity pity—
Hath done this deed on Cæsar.”

Antony presently shook hands with the party assembled round him ; but his heart was sad, and he cried :—

“That I did love thee, Cæsar, oh, 'tis true :
If then thy spirit look upon us now,
Shall it not grieve thee dearer than thy death,
To see thy Antony making his peace,
Shaking the bloody fingers of thy foes,
Most noble ! in the presence of thy corse ?
Had I as many eyes as thou hast wounds,
Weeping as fast as they stream forth thy blood,
It would become me better than to close
In terms of friendship with thine enemies.”

Cassius here said that he did not blame Antony for being a friend to Cæsar, but it would be well to know whether they might rely on him as of their party, or not.

Then Antony said he was friendly with them all, if only they would give him some reason why Cæsar had been dangerous : and on this point Brutus promised that he should be abundantly satisfied.

The next request Antony had to make was, that at the funeral

of Cæsar he might be permitted to utter an oration in his honour. This Brutus granted; for he meant first to address the people himself, and give his reasons for committing the deed, which might appear a cruel one if unexplained.

Leaving the dead body in the hands of Antony, that he might prepare it for the coming rites, Brutus and Cassius, followed by the citizens, hastened to the Forum to give the reasons for which Cæsar had died. Ascending the rostrum, Brutus thus addressed the expectant people:—

“Romans, countrymen, and lovers! hear me for my cause; and be silent, that you may hear: believe me for mine honour; and have respect to mine honour, that you may believe: censure me in your wisdom; and awake your senses, that you may the better judge. If there be any in this assembly, any dear friend of Cæsar’s, to him I say, that Brutus’ love to Cæsar’s was no less than his. If, then, that friend demand why Brutus rose against Cæsar, this is my answer:—Not that I loved Cæsar less, but that I loved Rome more. Had you rather Cæsar were living, and die all slaves, than that Cæsar were dead, to live all free men? As Cæsar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honour him: but, as he was ambitious, I slew him. There is tears for his love; joy for his fortune; honour for his valour; and death for his ambition.”

Then, having called on the people to speak out, and say if one among them would desire to be a bondman, if there was one who would not be a Roman, or who loved not his country, they responded to him as with one voice — “None, Brutus! none!”

Here Antony and others brought in the dead body of Cæsar ; but for some moments the tumult was such that he could not address the people, according to the permission he had previously received from Brutus. Presently, however, there was silence : and Antony began to remind them how they had once loved Cæsar ; then, declaring he had no desire to offend Brutus, asked them if he should read to them the will which his dead friend had left behind him.

Having thus excited their interest, he hesitated, saying that perhaps if he should read it they might be inflamed, and harm would come of it.

This but increased the desire of the throng, who pressed close to Antony ; and they insisted on the will being read to them, while they formed a ring round Cæsar's body.

Showing them the mantle which enwrapped that dead form, Antony reminded the people of the summer evening when Cæsar first put it on in his tent, after he overcame the Nervii ; and then he cried :—

“ Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through :
See what a rent the envious Casca made :
Through this the well-belovèd Brutus stabbed ;
And as he plucked his cursèd steel away,
Mark how the blood of Cæsar followed it,
As rushing out of doors, to be resolved
If Brutus so unkindly knocked, or no ;
For Brutus, as you know, was Cæsar's angel :—
Judge, O ye gods, how dearly Cæsar loved him !
This was the most unkindest cut of all :
For when the noble Cæsar saw him stab,

Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,
Quite vanquished him : then burst his mighty heart."

The feeling of the populace was now powerfully enkindled against Brutus and his party ; and they declared they would avenge Cæsar's death, and burn, fire, kill, and slay. With wild cries they hurried to the houses of Brutus, Cassius, Decius, and

"See what a rent the envious Casca made."

the rest, to burn them to the ground ; and confusion reigned throughout the city.

In his will, Julius Cæsar had adopted his great-nephew Octavius as a son : and many of the soldiers now gathered round him, and urged him to avenge his uncle's death ; so a battle took place on the plains of Philippi, wherein the conspirators were overcome.

Rather than be taken prisoner, Brutus forced his servant

Strato to hold out his sword, while he ran upon it, and thus died. Finding his wounded and lifeless body, and hearing how he had met his end, Antony said :—

“This was the noblest Roman of them all :
All the conspirators save only he

“ Brutus forced his servant Strato to hold out his sword.”

Did that they did in envy of great Cæsar :
He only, in a general honest thought
And common good to all, made one of them.
His life was gentle ; and the elements
So mixed in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, ‘ This was a man ! ’ ”

III.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.



LEOPATRA, the beautiful Egyptian queen, sat in a gorgeous room in her palace at Alexandria, with Antony, the Roman triumvir, at her side. Long had he lingered in that land, held captive by her charms; but now, as an attendant entered bringing, he said, news from Rome, Cleopatra divined that it was a command for his return issued by Cæsar, and begged that he would hear the messenger.

Antony was in no mood for aught but pleasure, nor would he be balked of some amusement which had been pre-arranged, and to enjoy which he presently set forth in the company of the fair queen and her attendants.

“Is Cæsar with Antonius prized so slight?”

his friend Demetrius asked of Philo, who replied,—

“Sir, sometimes, when he is not Antony,
He comes too short of that great property
Which still should go with Antony.”

When the messenger was permitted later to disclose the

tidings he had journeyed from Rome to deliver, Antony found there was urgent need of his departure. Not only was his wife Fulvia dead, but many letters petitioned his return; for—

“Sextus Pompeius

Hath given the dare to Cæsar, and commands
The empire of the sea: our slippery people,
Whose love is never linked to the deserver
Till his deserts are past, begin to throw
Pompey the Great and all his dignities
Upon his son; who, high in name and power,
Higher than both in blood and life, stands up
For the main soldier.”

Cleopatra was vexed that this conference kept Antony so long from her, and she bade one of her maids, named Charmian, bring word what he was doing.

“See where he is, who’s with him, what he does, —
I did not send you:—if you find him sad,
Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report
That I am sudden sick: quick, and return.”

When Cleopatra heard from his lips of his approaching departure, she was very troubled, and said many bitter words of reproach because he was leaving her. However, his purpose this time remained unshaken, and he took his farewell, promising that the remembrance of her should go everywhere with him. In former days this queen had charmed Cæsar, and also the great Pompey; but Antony had won still higher favour, and she bewailed his absence most bitterly, calling on her maids to imagine with her where he was, and what he might be doing, as the

days wore on. She also sent constant messengers after him bearing letters from her hand. Alexas had brought the last message from the Roman, with the gift of a wonderfully large and beautiful pearl. It was this :—

“ Say, the firm Roman to great Egypt sends
This treasure of an oyster; at whose foot,
To mend the petty present, I will piece



“ Cleopatra heard from his lips of his approaching departure.”

Her opulent throne with kingdoms; all the east,
Say thou, shall call her mistress.”

Cleopatra was full of loving words about Antony; but when her maid Charmian began to speak praise of Cæsar, she was displeased, especially when reminded that once she had been wont to praise him also; and *those* days she declared to be her “salad days,” when she was “green in judgment.”

Pompey was at this time rejoicing at the absence of so brave a soldier: he said the sea was his, and the love of the people; Antony away in Egypt could make war on none, and Cæsar and Lepidus were both taken up with other matters. He was startled when told that the two last-named generals were already at the



"The first meeting of the triumvirs was not altogether amicable."

head of an army against him, and Antony was hourly expected home.

The first meeting of the triumvirs was not altogether amicable. Cæsar complained of Antony's dead wife Fulvia, who in his absence had stirred up ill-feeling, and brought about civil warfare; while he himself had remained away, a slave to the charms of the Egyptian queen, instead of giving the aid of arms in case of difficulty, according to his oath.

Antony was willing to make apology for his long absence :—

“ Truth is, that Fulvia,
To have me out of Egypt, made wars here;
For which myself, the ignorant motive, do
So far ask pardon as befits mine honour
To stoop in such a case.”

Probably peace between these two men might not have been so quickly made but for the good offices of Mæcenas, who reminded them that their wrangling would be better deferred till Pompey was no more their adversary. Agrippa (another of Cæsar's friends) went further, by proposing that Octavia, the sister of Cæsar, should be taken as Antony's wife in place of the deceased Fulvia, and thus their union should be strongly cemented.

“ By this marriage,
All little jealousies, which now seem great,
And all great fears, which now import their dangers,
Would then be nothing: truths would be tales,
Where now half tales be truths: her love to both
Would, each to other, and all loves to both,
Draw after her.”

The project seemed as agreeable to Antony as to Cæsar. With a hearty hand-grasp they acknowledged themselves henceforth as brothers, and declared that the marriage should be arranged even before they put themselves in arms against Pompey.

Enobarbus, having been in attendance on Antony during his stay in Egypt, had much to tell his former friends—especially of the gorgeous appearance of Cleopatra when first seen by the

Roman general. It had been while in her barge on the river Cydnus—a barge “like a burnished throne,” with poop of gold and sails of purple, rarely perfumed; pretty dimpled boys stood fanning their lovely mistress as she reclined upon a couch of cloth of gold, and gracefully dressed maidens lingered round her. This was the state with which she reached the landing-place

“She reclined upon a couch of cloth of gold.”

where Antony was idly loitering; and when he invited her to sup with him, she sent him word it would be better he became her guest.

“If beauty, wisdom, modesty, can settle
The heart of Antony, Octavia is
A blessed lottery to him,”

remarked Mæcenas; and then they separated, and took their

way to Cæsar's house, where Antony's marriage was to be immediately celebrated.

The days passed slowly and heavily in the Egyptian palace. Cleopatra's attendants felt it difficult to humour her changeful fancies, and it seemed as if there was no way of pleasing her but to talk of Antony. Soon there came a messenger from Italy;

"A messenger from Italy. . . the bearer of ill tidings."

whose face was grave, as one who knew himself the bearer of ill tidings.

"Antony's dead!—If thou say so, villain,
Thou kill'st thy mistress"—

cried the passionate woman.

"Will't please you hear me?" was the reply; to which she answered,—

“ I have a mind to strike thee ere thou speak'st :
Yet, if thou say Antony lives, is well,
Or friends with Cæsar, or not captive to him,
I'll set thee in a shower of gold, and hail
Rich pearls upon thee.”

Being told that he was well, and not only friends, but greater friends than ever with Cæsar, Cleopatra cried out that the fortunes of the messenger were made. But there was more to hear. When at length she realized that Antony had married Octavia, her fury was terrible, and she threatened the man with the most hideous punishments, and struck him violently again and again, and she would have killed him with the dagger worn at her side had he not escaped from her hands. Then some shame possessed her, and she ordered his recall, promising not to hurt him more.

“ Is he married ? ” she asked ; and it seemed she found the assurance hard to receive, for she put the same question many times, as if hoping the messenger might still answer it otherwise. At last, however, she turned to her maidens, bidding them lead her away, and then discover from this man what was the age and appearance of Octavia, and what the colour of her hair, how tall she was, and every possible detail.

Afterwards she declared she must make these inquiries herself, and the trembling messenger re-entered her presence with much reluctance. He durst not tell that Octavia was fair to look on, so he represented her as a widow, not comely of shape, with a round face, brown hair, a low forehead, and of dwarfish stature. In this way he escaped more blows, and Cleopatra gave him gold, and bade him be prepared to carry letters back to Rome for her.

Now came the moment for Cæsar and Pompey to speak together before the contest. Lepidus and Antony were also present, with a guard of soldiers in waiting. It was to revenge his father, Pompey declared, that he had prepared his ships of war, and he would have scourged Rome for its ingratitude to one so noble; but now, he told them, he meant to accept the terms of peace Cæsar offered, which were, that Sicily and Sardinia should be given him, if he would send a specified quantity of wheat to Rome, and also rid the seas of the pirates. Instead of bloodshed, then, there was a friendly banquet on board Pompey's galley, which his own attendants were ill pleased to see, believing that this peace would be the loss of his good fortune. Menas went to his master when the triumvirs were foolish and helpless from excessive drinking, and said,—

“ These three world-sharers, these competitors,
Are in thy vessel: let me cut the cable;
And, when we are put off, fall to their throats:
All there is thine.”

Pompey would not have regretted the act had it been done unknown to him, but he felt that he dare not consent to it when asked, else would his honour be for ever gone:—

“ Being done unknown,
I should have found it afterwards well done;
But must condemn it now.”

This displeased Menas, and he said he would no longer follow Pompey's fortunes; and when the guests were conveyed on shore he ridiculed their condition, and ordered the drums and trumpets to bid farewell to such “ great fellows.”

Being no longer wanted on the battle-field, Antony prepared to carry his newly-made wife to Athens; and Cæsar saw them depart with much sorrow, for his sister was very dear to him. During this interval, Cleopatra had been scheming to regain her power over Antony. Nor was she unsuccessful, for he yielded to her influences so completely that Octavius Cæsar grew angry and threatened to take arms against him.

This caused great distress to Octavia; and, as she said—

“ A more unhappy lady,
If this division chance, ne’er stood between,
Praying for both parts:
The good gods will mock me presently,
When I shall pray, ‘ Oh, bless my lord and husband !’
Undo that prayer, by crying out as loud,
‘ Oh, bless my brother !’ Husband win, win brother,
Prays, and destroys the prayer ; no midway
’Twixt these extremes at all.”

She entreated her husband to let her go to Rome and seek to bring about a reconciliation. Nor did he refuse her; but in the meanwhile active preparations for war were carried forward on both sides.

Cæsar was indignant that his sister should come in such haste and poor state to her native city. The wife of Antony should have an army to usher her, and crowds of people to cry her welcome, he said; nay, had he known of her expected arrival, he would himself have travelled by sea and land to meet her.

When she spoke of her husband as being in Athens, the angry

brother declared it was not so: scarce had she left him, than he hastened to Alexandria, where, with Cleopatra at his side, he had publicly displayed himself, and made her absolute queen of Lower Syria, Cyprus, and Lydia.

“Welcome to Rome;
Nothing more dear to me. You are abused
Beyond the mark of thought,”

he added; and Octavia could scarcely believe such evil of Antony till assured again of its truth.

Cleopatra was rejoicing in the coming war, and purposed being present on the field, notwithstanding that several of Antony's officers sought to dissuade her on the ground that she would distract his attention, and furthermore, she would cause him to be yet more lightly spoken of in Rome, where men laughed and said that a woman and her maids were at the head of military affairs.

“I will not stay behind,” she answered; for she cared little what the Romans said of her. Antony had determined to fight by sea rather than on land, and obstinately refused the counsel of those who reminded him that his ships were not well manned, while Cæsar's fleet was renowned. “I'll fight at sea,” he said again, urged on by Cleopatra; and then he bade Canidius take command over the horse and foot soldiers, while he embarked.

It was as all had foreseen,—a most shameful loss of honour. Antony and his brave Roman legions on land might have been victorious, yet he suffered himself to follow Cleopatra and her Egyptian and Phœnician soldiers, though failure was certain.

Bitterly did he reproach himself when he returned to Alex-

andria ingloriously defeated. The very earth, he said, was ashamed to bear him; and he bade his men fly and make their peace with the victorious Cæsar.

“O my lord, my lord,
Forgive my fearful sails!”



“O my lord, my lord, forgive my fearful sails!”

said Cleopatra, seeing his deep dejection; but Antony would not be consoled, and answered:

“You did know
How much you were my conqueror; and that
My sword, made weak by my affection, would
Obey it on all cause.”

He had already despatched to the camp of Cæsar a school-master as his ambassador to make terms of peace. That he

should choose such a messenger was a proof of his fall, for he had been wont to have men high in station at his bidding. Yet thus it was; and when Euphronius had made apology for appearing on such business, he delivered the request of Antony:—

“ Lord of his fortunes he salutes thee, and
Requires to live in Egypt: which not granted,
He lessens his requests; and to thee sues
To let him breathe between the heavens and earth,
A private man in Athens: this for him.
Next, Cleopatra does confess thy greatness;
Submits her to thy might; and of thee craves
The circle of the Ptolemies for her heirs,
Now hazarded to thy grace.”

Cæsar answered that he would have no ears for Antony's petition; but to the queen he would give audience, on condition of her either driving her disgraced friend from Egypt or taking his life there. This was all the grace Euphronius could win.

“ Is that his answer ? ” said Antony when his messenger returned.

“ Ay, my lord.”

“ The queen shall then have courtesy, so she will yield us up.”

“ He says so.”

“ Let her know it.”

Cleopatra was not slow to promise to obey Cæsar's wishes; she sent him word that she would promptly lay her crown at his feet. But even while she made these concessions, Antony came in, and discovering Cæsar's ambassador in conversation with her, had

him seized and severely scourged. Then, with reawakened spirit, he challenged the great victor to another combat: for had he not still his land forces? and the dispersed navy was also regathering.

Some discouragement, however, came to Antony as he gained the battle-field, for only then he learned that one brave soldier—even Enobarbus—had abandoned him for Cæsar. When assured that this was true, he ordered all his chests and treasures to be sent after the deserter:—

“ Detain no jot, I charge thee: write to him—
I will subscribe—gentle adieus and greetings;
Say that I wish he never find more cause
To change a master.—Oh, my fortunes have
Corrupted honest men.”

Already Enobarbus had regretted his desertion, but his self-reproach deepened when the messenger from Antony sought him, and he cried:—

“ I am alone the villain of the earth,
And feel I am so most. O Antony,
Thou mine of bounty, how wouldst thou have paid
My better service, when my turpitude
Thou dost so crown with gold! This blows my heart:
If swift thought break it not, a swifter mean
Shall outstrike thought: but thought will do't, I feel
I fight against thee!—No: I will go seek
Some ditch wherein to die; the foul'st best fits
My latter part of life.”

The first encounter served to rout Cæsar and his troops, so

that Antony, though wounded, returned rejoicingly to Cleopatra; but a doleful change of fortune was to follow. Having induced him to believe the second encounter was at sea, and thus send his best troops to man the vessels, Cæsar meanwhile had prepared them to join his standard; and thus Antony found himself betrayed and well-nigh abandoned. With bitter reproaches he addressed Cleopatra; for this defalcation was in the Egyptians, and he believed she had some part in their treachery, and must secretly have made friends with Cæsar. So he would not suffer her in his presence; and in the hope of moving him to tenderness she concealed herself within a monument, and bade her maidens report her as dead. Then, in his grief, Antony cried out that he would overtake her, and bade his faithful soldier Eros draw sword and despatch him quickly; but the man shrank back, begging to be excused from obedience to such a command.

Antony would not listen to his pleading, and reminded him how he had sworn to do even this were he so commanded.

“Turn from me, then, that noble countenance,
Wherein the worship of the whole world lies,”

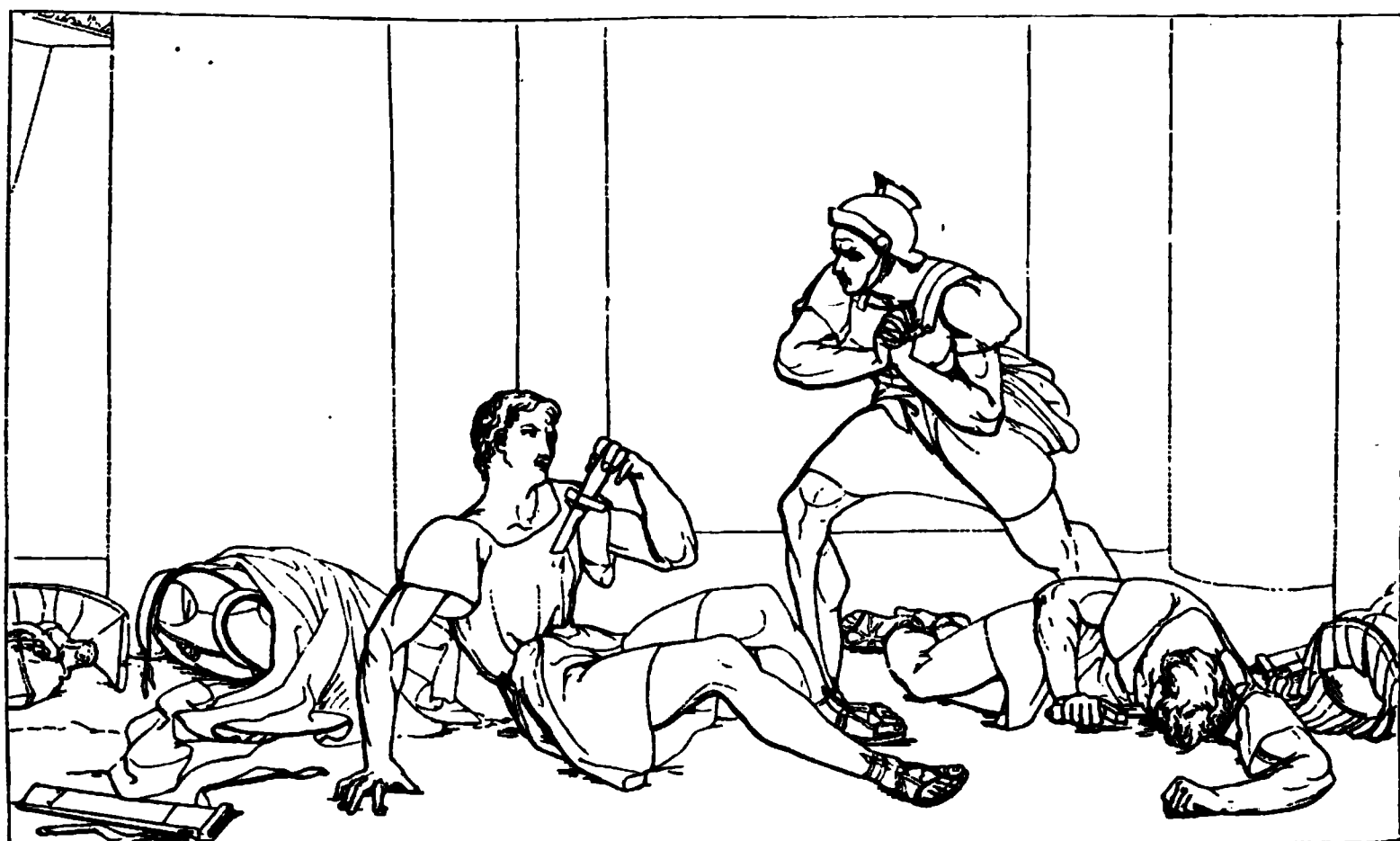
said Eros; but this was only a subterfuge, for, in order to avoid giving the fatal stroke to his beloved master, he fell upon his drawn sword, and thus expired.

“Thou teachest me, O valiant Eros, what
I should, and thou couldst not,”

cried Antony; and then he too fell on his sword. But death was not so immediate as in the case of his faithful follower, and the

guard, who came in at the instant, carried him bleeding and fainting into Cleopatra's presence.

Her grief was wild and passionate. "O Antony, Antony, Antony!" she moaned, and, bending down, would have his head rest on her till he drew his last breath. Then she called her



"The guard....came in at the instant."

maids to take her away, saying, "We have no friend but resolution."

When the tidings of Antony's death were conveyed to Cæsar, he was moved by strong emotion; for however great had been their recent differences, he could not forget how long there had been the closest friendship between them.

"Let me lament,
With tears as sovereign as the blood of hearts,

That thou, my brother, my competitor
In top of all design, my mate in empire,
Friend and companion in the front of war,
The arm of mine own body, and the heart
Where mine his thoughts did kindle,—that our stars,
Unreconcilable, should divide
Our equalness to this.”



“ O Antony, Antony, Antony!”

Just as he finished speaking, a messenger came to announce the arrival of Cleopatra, and Cæsar sent some of his friends to assure her of his favour. But later he went himself to converse with her, and then she spoke as if she were his captive, offering a list of all her costly possessions, which she was ready to yield to him. She listened with calmness also to his plans for conveying her and her maids to Rome, knowing all the while how she

should frustrate them by the act on which she had determined. When left alone, this unhappy queen bade Charmian and Iras clothe her in her most gorgeous robes, and set the crown on her head; and next there came to her a poor man who had already been commanded to bring some poisonous asps concealed in a basket of ripe figs. Then the three women—mistress and



"She spoke as if she were his captive."

servants—took farewell of each other, and applied this means of death to their bodies, Iras being the first to fall a victim.

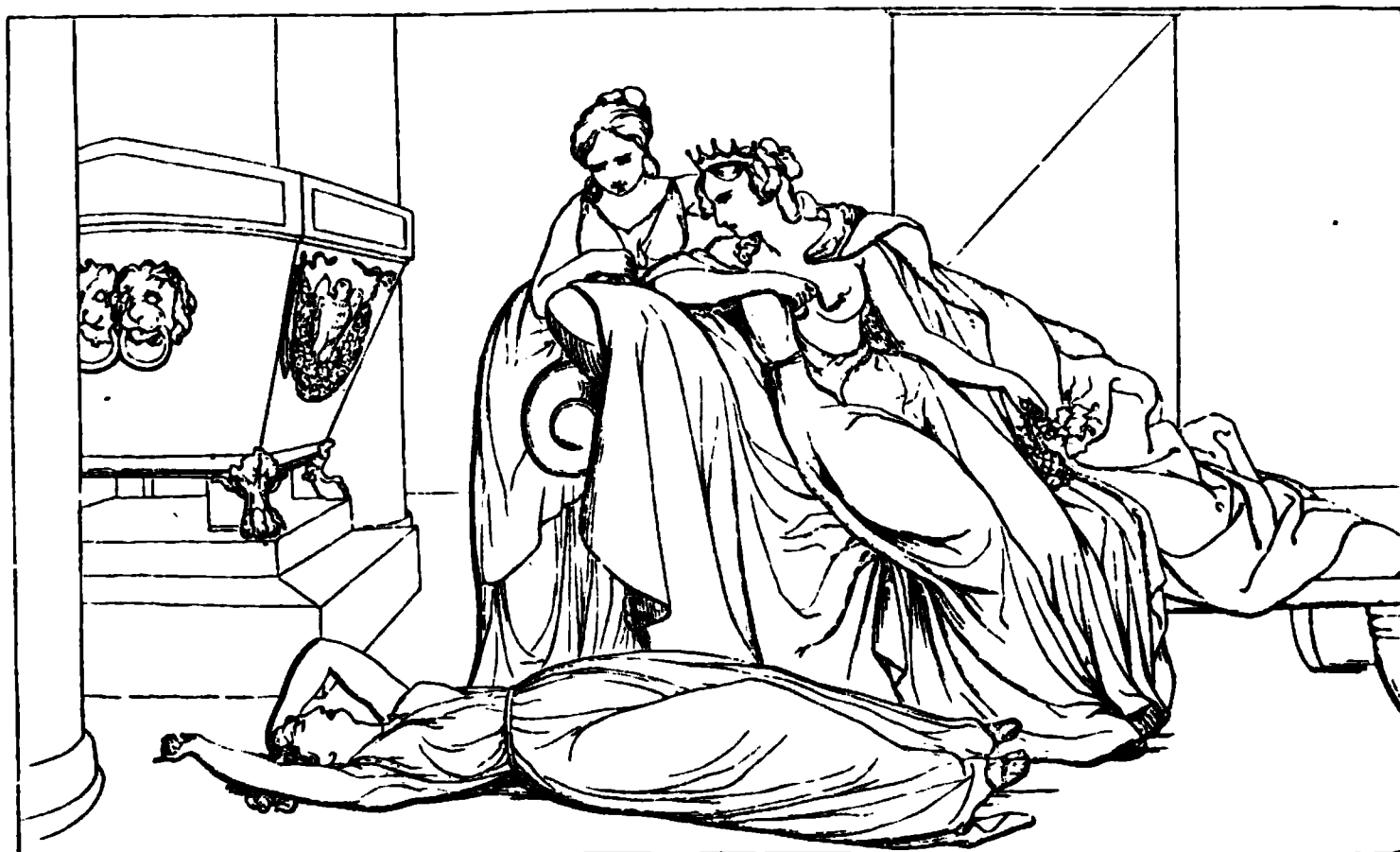
*"If thou and nature can so gently part,
The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch,"*

said Cleopatra, applying a second asp to her arm. "O Antony!" and then she expired just as the guard hastened in to say that

Cæsar had sent for her. Shocked at the sight, they turned to the one survivor, saying, "Charmian, is this well done?"

"It is well done," replied the woman, and then she too fell prostrate in death.

Cæsar had felt a conviction that some such project was in Cleopatra's mind to avoid the humiliation of being taken to



"Iras being the first to fall a victim."

Rome; but he had not thought there was yet time in which she could have effected her purpose. He came to see her, beautiful still in a death which had the semblance of sleep, and turning to his attendants, he said:

"Take up her bed;
And bear her women from the monument.
She shall be buried by her Antony."

IV.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

NEWS had reached the palace of Priam, King of Troy, that from the isles of Greece a fleet was sailing, and that the princes who reigned there had vowed that they would ransack his city.

Troilus, one of the sons of Priam, declared that he had no courage for the encounter:—

“The Greeks are strong, and skilful to their strength,
Fierce to their skill, and to their fierceness valiant;
But I am weaker than a woman’s tear,
Tamer than sleep, fonder than ignorance,
Less valiant than the virgin in the night,
And skillless as unpractised infancy.”

He spoke thus to Pandarus, the kinsman of a fair lady, by name Cressida, daughter of Calchas, who took part with the Greeks, though by birth he was a Trojan.

News came from the battle-field that Paris, also a son to king Priam, was wounded by the hand of Menelaus, a Grecian, and brother to the great Agamemnon.

The cause of the quarrel was that the beautiful Helen, wife to Menelaus, had bestowed her love on Paris, and was even then dwelling in Troy: and the Greeks demanded that she should be given up to her rightful husband.

Hector, the third of Priam's sons, advised his father to yield to their terms of peace and let Helen go. "She is not worth what she doth cost the holding," he said. As they argued this point, a noise was heard without the chamber of conference: it was Cassandra, Priam's daughter, who was a prophetess or seer of future events, and who now exclaimed,—

"Cry, Trojans, cry! lend me ten thousand eyes,
And I will fill them with prophetic tears."

Vainly did her brother Hector strive to silence her; and she went on,—

"Cry, Trojans, cry! a Helen and a woe:
Cry, cry! Troy burns, or else let Helen go."

Then Hector turned to Troilus and asked him if this utterance of Cassandra's did not confirm his own words, and prove that to fight for Helen was to fight in a bad cause.

Paris now interposed, for it was he who had carried Helen away from her own Grecian people; and he declared that he would not give her up, but would fight as long as he had life left him.

Troilus said that it was not for Helen's sake he desired war, but to maintain the glory of the Trojans, which would be tarnished by submitting to the threats of their foes; and so war was decided on.

In the Grecian camp there were gathered the great general Agamemnon, and Ulysses, Nestor, Ajax, and Diomedes, commanders under him, debating what was to be done, as Achilles, in whom lay their chief confidence, refused to fight on the coming day. It was his pride, they said, which was his motive, and he expected to be implored to swerve from this decision; so they resolved to fight without him, and leave him resting in his tent.

While the battle raged, Helen was in a room of the palace looking on; and as a retreat was sounded, Paris called her to come and greet the warriors, believing that the sight of her beauty would make his brothers more willing to fight against those who desired to bear her away. But Troilus sought Cressida, the lady of his love. She had never yet confessed her affection for him; but now she owned it:—

“ I love you now ; but not, till now, so much.”

Whereupon her uncle—Pandarus—who was present, bade them never be false to each other.

Cressida said,—

“ If I be false, or swerve a hair from truth,
When time is old and hath forgot itself,
When waterdrops have worn the stones of Troy,
And blind oblivion swallowed cities up,
And mighty states characterless are grated
To dusty nothing ; yet let memory,
From false to false, among false maids in love,
Upbraid my falsehood !”

While they were thus conversing, the Grecian officers were

listening to the demand of Cressida's father, who had come before them saying, that he had abandoned Troy, incurred the name of traitor, suffered many inconveniences, and now besought a reward.

When Agamemnon asked what this request and reward might be, Calchas told them :—

“ You have a Trojan prisoner, called Antenor,
Yesterday took : Troy holds him very dear.
Oft have you—often have you thanks therefore—
Desired my Cressid in right great exchange,
Whom Troy hath still denied : but this Antenor,
I know is such a wrest in their affairs
That their negotiations all must slack,
Wanting his manage : and they will almost
Give us a prince of blood, a son of Priam,
In change of him : let him be sent, great princes,
And he shall buy my daughter ; and her presence
Shall quite strike off all service I have done,
In most accepted pain.”

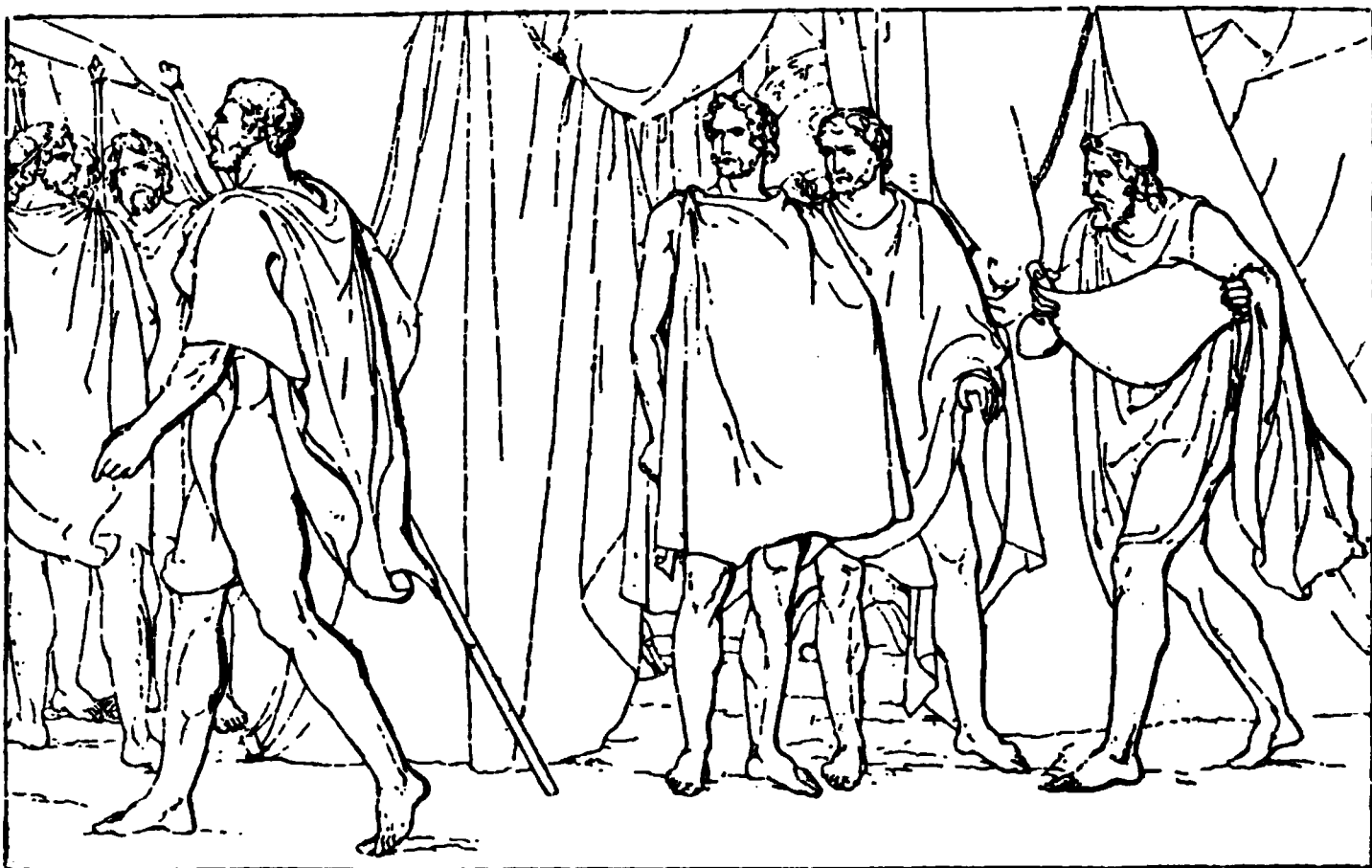
Agamemnon at once accepted the offer, and bade Diomedes see to the exchange, and bring Cressida to the Grecian camp.

As Calchas and Diomedes went out together, Ulysses came with the news that Achilles stood at the entrance of his tent, and he added :—

“ Please it our general to pass strangely by him,
As if he were forgot ; and, princes all,
Lay negligent and loose regard upon him :
I will come last. 'Tis like he'll question me
Why such unplausive eyes are bent on him :
If so, I have derision medicinal

To use between your strangeness and his pride,
Which his own will shall have desire to drink.
It may be good : pride hath no other glass
To show itself but pride."

Agamemnon agreed to this, and bade the rest follow his example in greeting Achilles disdainfully or not at all.



" Please it our general to pass strangely by him."

This conduct greatly surprised and annoyed him, and he asked his friend Patroclus what they meant by it; for once these same lords had been humble in his presence.

" What, am I poor of late ? "

he cried, and then went on,—

“ ’Tis certain, greatness, once fall’n out with Fortune,
Must fall out with men too : what the declined is,
He shall as soon read in the eyes of others
As feel in his own fall ; for men, like butterflies,
Show not their mealy wings but to the summer,
And not a man, for being simply man,
Hath any honour, but honour for those honours
That are without him, as place, riches, favour,
Prizes of accident as oft as merit :
Which when they fall, as being slippery standers,
The love that leaned on them as slippery too,
Do one pluck down another, and together
Die in the fall. But ’tis not so with me :
Fortune and I are friends : I do enjoy
At ample point all that I did possess,
Save these men’s looks ; who do, methinks, find out
Something not worth in me such rich beholding
As they have often given.”

Just then Ulysses drew near, and, as they spoke together, began to tell Achilles how much the Grecians trusted in the skill and strength of Ajax—as much as if he had already vanquished Priam’s powerful son Hector, who was the chief of all the Trojans in battle.

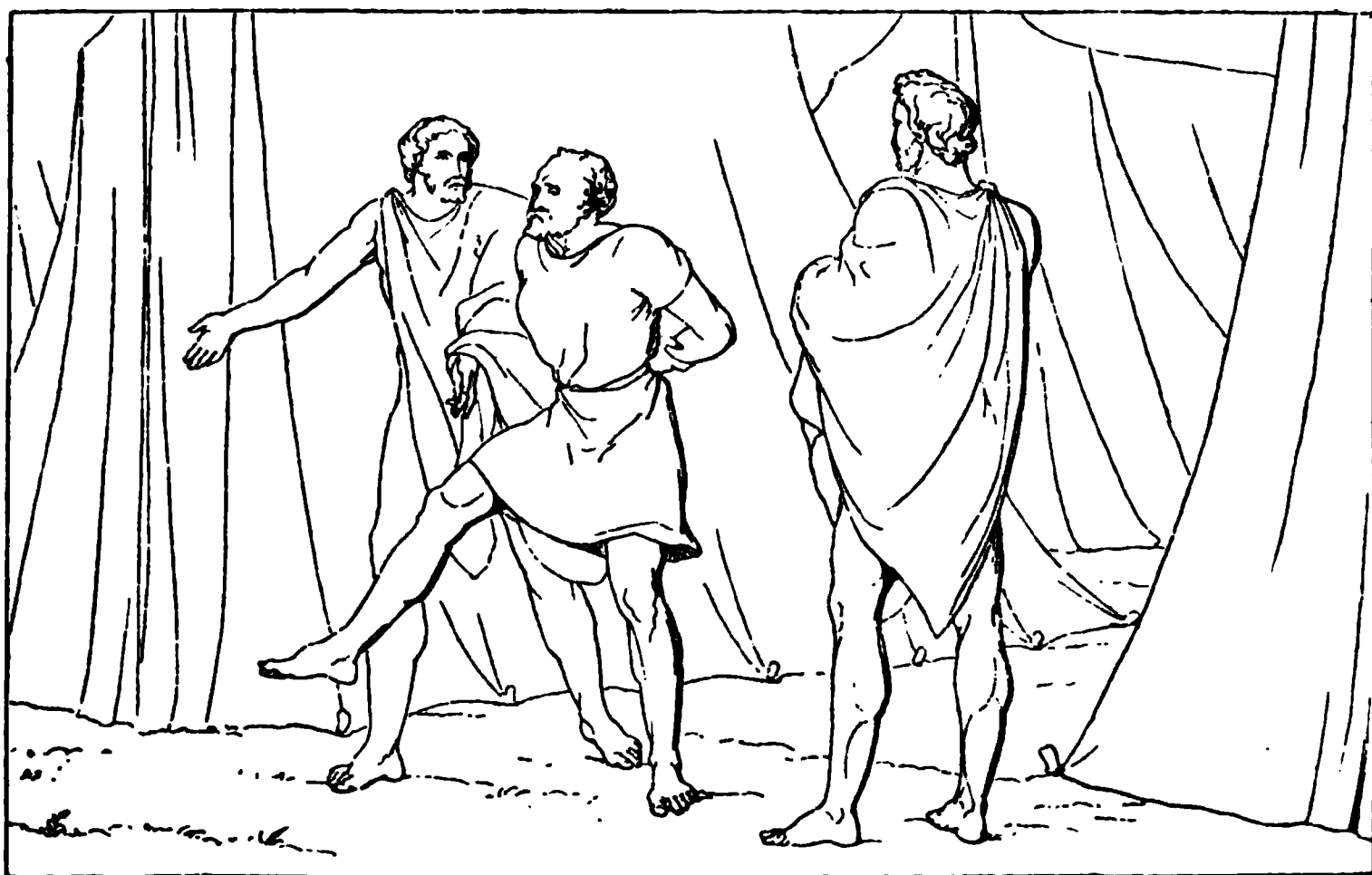
This touched the pride of Achilles. “ What, are my deeds forgot ? ” he cried.

Ulysses thus answered him :—

“ Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,
A great-sized monster of ingritudes :
Those scraps are good deeds past ; which are devoured

As fast as they are made, forgot as soon
As done : perséverance, dear my lord,
Keeps honour bright : to have done is to hang
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail
In monumental mockery."

When Ulysses had left him, Achilles felt that his reputation



"He stalks up and down like a peacock."

as a skilful warrior was at stake ; but a great desire possessed him to see and speak with this mighty Hector unarmed.

Just then Thersites, one of the attendants on the Grecian commanders, came to tell that Ajax was so taken up with the prospect of fighting in single combat with Hector on the morrow, that he scarce knew what he was about. "He stalks up and down like a peacock,—a stride and a stand : ruminates like an

hostess that hath no arithmetic but her brain to set down her reckoning: bites his lip with a politic regard, as who should say, 'There were wit in this head, an 'twould out;' and so there is, but it lies as coldly in him as fire in a flint, which will not show without knocking. The man's undone for ever; for if Hector break not his neck i' the combat, he'll break't himself in vain-glory."

To Ajax, therefore, as well as to the Trojan hero, Achilles sent an invitation to his tent, and procured a safe-conduct for Hector from Agamemnon.

By this time Diomedes had entered the city of Troy in the company of Calchas, that he might receive Cressida in exchange for Antenor, the prisoner of war.

Pandarus told Cressida of what was to befall her. "Thou art changed for Antenor: thou must to thy father, and be gone from Troilus: 'twill be his death; 'twill be his bane; he cannot bear it."

But Cressida at first declared she would not thus be given up to the Grecians:—

"I will not, uncle: I have forgot my father:
I know no touch of consanguinity;
No kin, no love, no blood, no soul so near me
As the sweet Troilus."

When her lover came in, Cressida turned to him, asking, "Is it true that I must go from Troy?"

"A hateful truth," answered Troilus; for he knew that the king, his father, had agreed to the exchange: but he said,—

“Be thou true,
And I will see thee.”

“Oh, you shall be exposed, my lord, to dangers
As infinite as imminent!”—

cried Cressida.

But the prospect of danger was no terror to Troilus; and

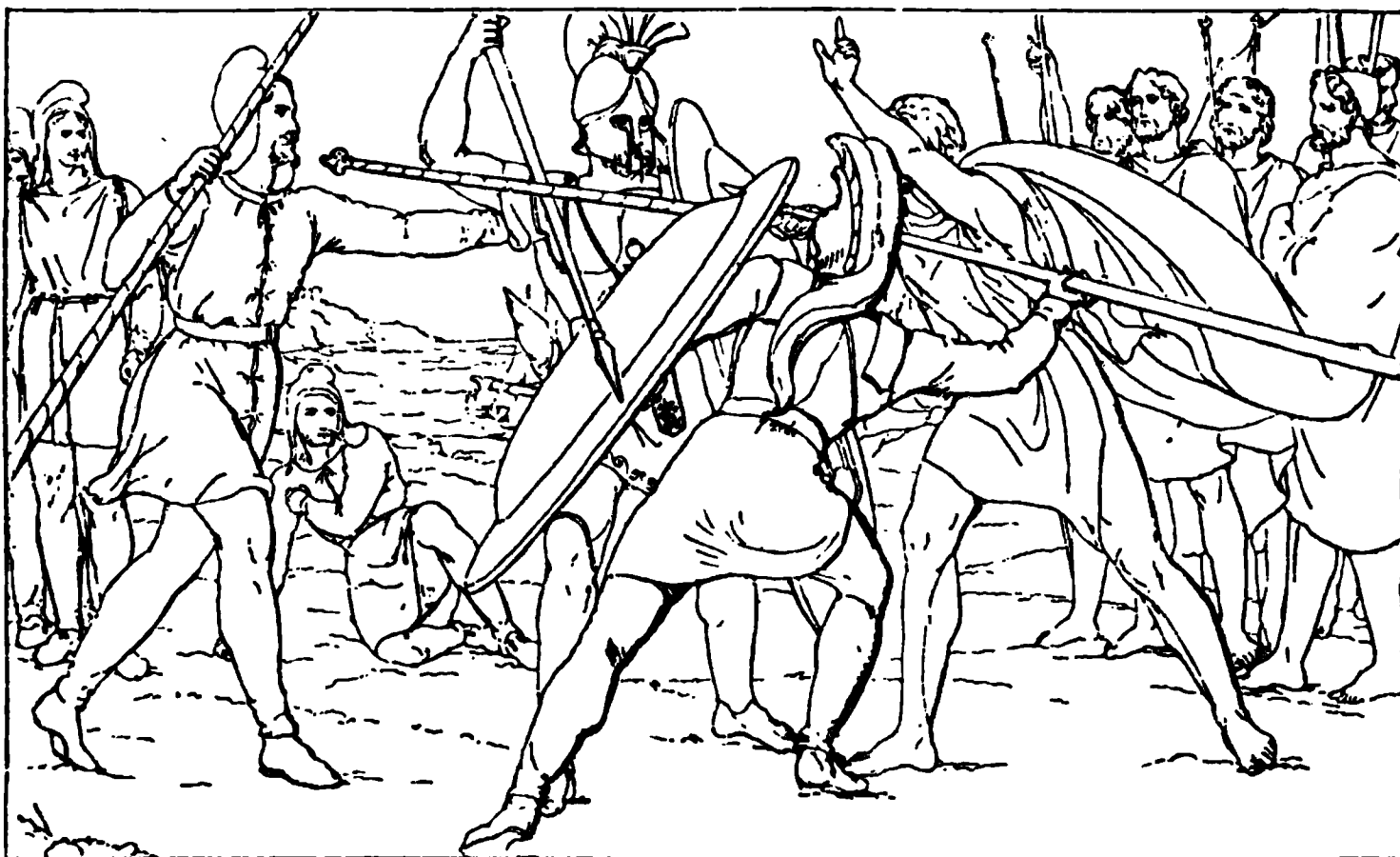


“Be thou true, and I will see thee.”

giving her a sleeve which she should wear, and receiving from her a glove in exchange, they parted.

About this time Ajax entered the Grecian camp, ready armed for the approaching combat, bidding the trumpeter summon Hector. Presently the Trojan's trumpet answered, and Hector came forward, attended by his brother Troilus, Æneas, and others.

Then the two strong combatants closed upon each other; but after a brief struggle Hector declared he would fight no more, for Ajax was akin to him, being the son of his own father's sister. As they embraced in friendship, Æneas asked what further would be done; but Achilles was gazing at the strong Trojan, and pres-



"The two strong combatants closed upon each other."

ently appointed to receive him that night in peace as a guest in his tent, but on the morrow to meet in single combat.

When Hector arrived at the tent of Achilles, he found great preparations for his entertainment; for the Grecian soldier had said,—

"Let us feast him to the height."

Troilus, meanwhile, was hovering near the tent of Calchas, where Cressida had been taken; and as he heard her voice utter-

ing words of affection to Diomedes, he could not but think of her promises to himself, and murmured,—

“O Cressid ! O false Cressid ! false, false, false !
Let all untruths stand by thy stained name,
And they’ll seem glorious.”

In Priam’s palace there was sorrow rather than feasting : for Cassandra foretold her brother Hector’s defeat ; and his wife, Andromache, had dreamed of terrible slaughter, and implored him not to meet Achilles as he had promised.

Finding that he would not hear their prayers and tears, but declared that his honour was dearer to him than life, Cassandra sought her royal father and brought him to Hector.

Then said the king,—

“Come, Hector, come, go back :
Thy wife hath dreamed ; thy mother hath had visions ;
Cassandra doth foresee ; and I myself
Am like a prophet suddenly enrapt
To tell thee that this day is ominous :
Therefore, come back.”

Hector, however, maintained that he could not break his faith ; and with some sternness bade his wife, Andromache, cease her entreaties. Troilus declared it was Cassandra, “this foolish, dreaming, superstitious girl,” who made all these difficulties ; but she heeded not, and cried,—

“Oh, farewell, dear Hector !
Look, how thou diest ! look, how thy eye turns pale !
Look, how thy wounds do bleed at many vents !
Hark, how Troy roars ! how Hecuba cries out !

How poor Andromache shrills her dolours forth !
Behold, distraction, frenzy, and amazement,
Like witless antics, one another meet,
And all cry, 'Hector ! Hector's dead !'—O Hector !

But her brothers treated all these forebodings of evil as mere fancies, and assured their father that at night they



"Come, Hector, come, go back."

would have good news for him and great deeds of which to boast.

Upon the field of combat both Hector and Troilus now did their part; for Troilus longed to vanquish those who had won from him the lady Cressida.

Ajax, meanwhile, had taken the Trojan general, Æneas, prisoner; and on hearing this Troilus cried,—

“ Ajax hath ta'en Æneas : shall it be ?
No, by the flame of yonder glorious heaven,
He shall not carry him : I'll be ta'en too,
Or bring him off :—Fate, hear me what I say !
I reckon not though I end my life to-day.”

Presently the sound of drums and shouting announced some victory. Hector had indeed fallen, and by the hand of Achilles.



“ Hector had indeed fallen.”

Bitterly did Troilus lament for his dead brother :—

“ Hector is gone :
Who shall tell Priam so, or Hecuba ?
Let him that will a screech-owl aye be called,
Go in to Troy, and say there, ‘ Hector’s dead : ’
There is a word will Priam turn to stone ;

Make wells and Niobes of the maids and wives, —
Cold statues of the youth,—and, in a word,
Scare Troy out of itself.”

Thus, with the humiliated Trojans he hastened from the sight of the victorious enemy; but his last words were the angry threatening of future retribution.

V.

CYMBELINE.

IN the old times, when our country was called Britain, a king reigned whose name was Cymbeline. He had three children, whose mother died while they were still very young. Imogen, the eldest, was brought up at her father's court; but the two boys had been stolen out of their nursery, nor could Cymbeline discover any trace of how they were taken away.

The king's second wife was a very unkind stepmother to Imogen. Yet, as the girl grew up to womanhood, the queen wished to arrange her marriage with her own son, so that he might succeed to the crown upon Cymbeline's death. But there was one named Posthumus, a gentleman and a scholar, whom Imogen loved. They had played together as children, studied under the same masters as they grew older, and at length married without speaking to any one on the subject. But the queen found some way of discovering this secret; and, in her anger and disappointment, she hastened to tell Cymbeline, who was full of indignation against his daughter. His first act was to banish

Posthumus for ever from Britain, which was, of course, a terrible grief to Imogen; and the queen then pretended to pity her, and offered to help them to meet privately before he set out on his way to Rome, where he intended to reside.

Imogen and Posthumus never suspected that the queen had any secret design in this affected kindness, and they were glad of

"Posthumus fastened a bracelet on her arm."

this opportunity of meeting for a last farewell. Imogen gave to her husband a ring which had belonged to her own mother; while Posthumus fastened a bracelet on her arm, begging her never to part with this token of his love. Meanwhile the queen resolved to persuade Imogen that hers was not a real marriage, but one which could be justly set aside, so that she might freely listen to the suit of her own son Cloten.

So Imogen remained alone and sorrowful in her father's palace, while Posthumus took up his abode at Rome. There he fell into the company of other young men; and on one occasion, when each in turn praised the beauty of some lady whom he loved, Posthumus declared that none was so fair, so virtuous, so justly beloved as his sweet lady, Imogen. Among the party was one named Iachimo, who, being vexed at this praise of a woman of Britain, tried to provoke Posthumus by feigning to doubt that she truly loved him, and at last induced him to permit a great trial of her constancy,—even that *he*, Iachimo, might journey to the distant country where she lived, and try to gain her affection. So sure did Posthumus feel, so thoroughly did he believe in Imogen's sincerity, that he had no fear of the test; and a wager was laid that Iachimo should lose a large sum of money if he was not successful; but should he win the lady's favour, he was to receive the ring which she had given to her husband at parting.

Arriving in Britain, Iachimo easily found admission to the presence of Imogen, because he called himself the friend of Posthumus; but, as soon as he began to tell her of his own love, he found there was no hope of gaining his purpose. But Iachimo was wicked enough to think of a way of deceiving Posthumus and pretending to have won the love of gentle Imogen. He bribed her servants with a large sum of money to put him in a trunk, and thus carry him into her chamber, so that when she was sleeping he might come out of his hiding-place and note down in a book the appearance of the room, and even take from Imogen's arm the bracelet which Posthumus had clasped there when they parted.

This accomplished, the base Iachimo set off directly for Rome, and, showing the bracelet, persuaded Posthumus to believe that Imogen had given it him. As he described the ornaments of the lady's room Posthumus listened doubtfully, for it was possible that Iachimo might have heard so much from others; but when he saw his own gift to Imogen, he broke out in passionate complaint of her falseness, and gave up to Iachimo the ring she had placed upon his finger.

That done, Posthumus wrote to a friend in Britain, telling him how Imogen had been proved false; and, in his first hot anger, he ordered this man, Pisanio, to take her to Milford Haven and destroy her life. Dearly as Posthumus had loved his fair young wife, his rage was such that he felt death was the only fitting punishment for such conduct as hers; and, to persuade her to accompany Pisanio, he wrote a letter representing that he would himself be at Milford Haven to meet her.

Poor Imogen had no suspicion that Posthumus was deceiving her,—she never thought in what a treacherous way her bracelet had been removed, though she was greatly troubled by its loss; so she prepared in all haste for her journey, thinking joyfully of meeting him she loved so much. When she reached the appointed place, and found it was death, not happy life, which was prepared for her, she was terribly afflicted; and Pisanio pitied her, and tried to make her believe that Posthumus would find out he had been unjust in his suspicion of her. He also advised Imogen to disguise herself by putting on the apparel of a boy, so that thus she might more safely travel about the country until she found some suitable shelter, where she would be secure

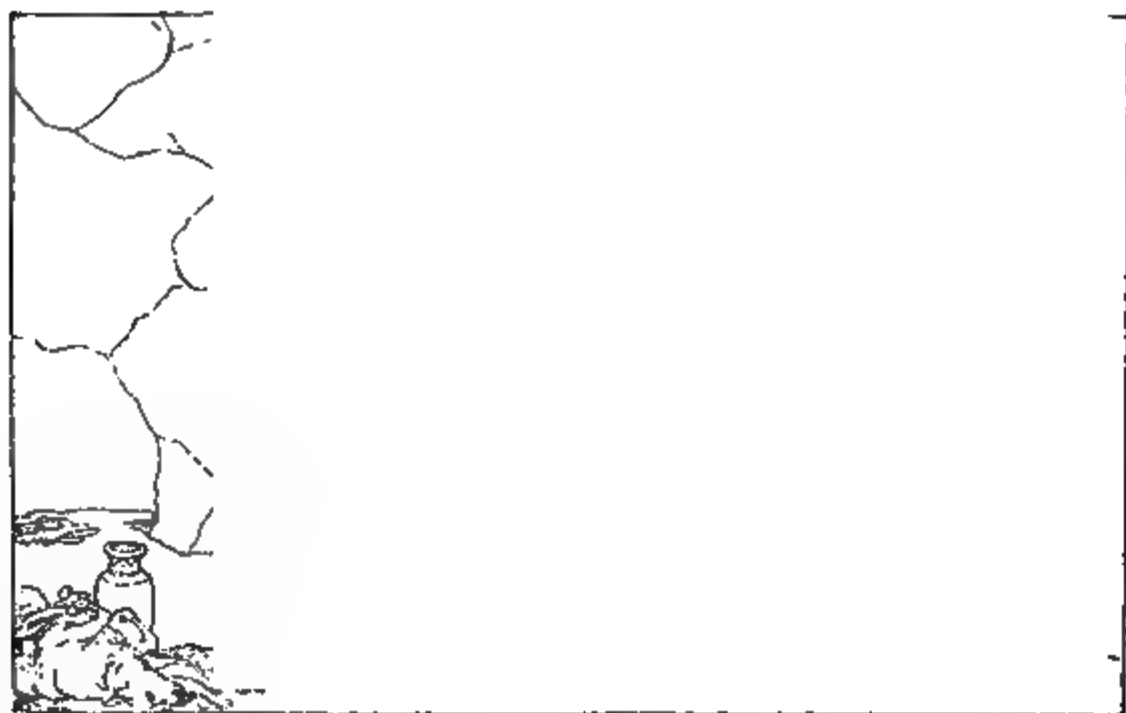
from the queen and her son Cloten, who still desired to win her hand.

Pisanio could not any longer remain with the sorrowful young lady, for he was required at court; but when he left he gave her a phial containing some cordial, which the queen, he said, had told him was a remedy for all kinds of disorders. In giving this phial to the faithful Pisanio, the queen really believed she had given him a poison which would destroy life; but it was only some simple drug which caused sleep for a few hours. Having done all he could for the fair Imogen, Pisanio left her, with many earnest prayers to Heaven for her safety; and, strangely enough, the lady unconsciously took her way to the dwelling where her own brothers had lived since their disappearance when they were infants! They had been stolen by one of Cymbeline's lords named Belarius, who thought thus to be revenged on the king for an act of injustice. But, though carried away in anger, he had loved the little children, and had reared them with all tenderness. Though they lived in a forest cave, they were not uneducated, and grew up into fine youths, fond of hunting and other sports, and desirous above all else of going to the wars.

At this lonely cave, then, did Imogen arrive, apparelled as a boy. No one was there, but she saw food, and, in fatigue and hunger, she sat down and began to eat. While thus engaged, Belarius and his adopted sons came home; but they stopped at the entrance of the cave, wondering at the exceeding beauty of their unknown visitor.

As she heard their voices, Imogen rose and said:

" Good masters, harm me not :
Before I entered here I called ; and thought
To have begged, or bought what I have took : good troth,
I have stolen nought, nor would not, though I had found
Gold strewed i' the floor. Here's money for my meat :
I would have left it on the board, so soon
As I had made my meal ; and parted
With prayers for the provider."

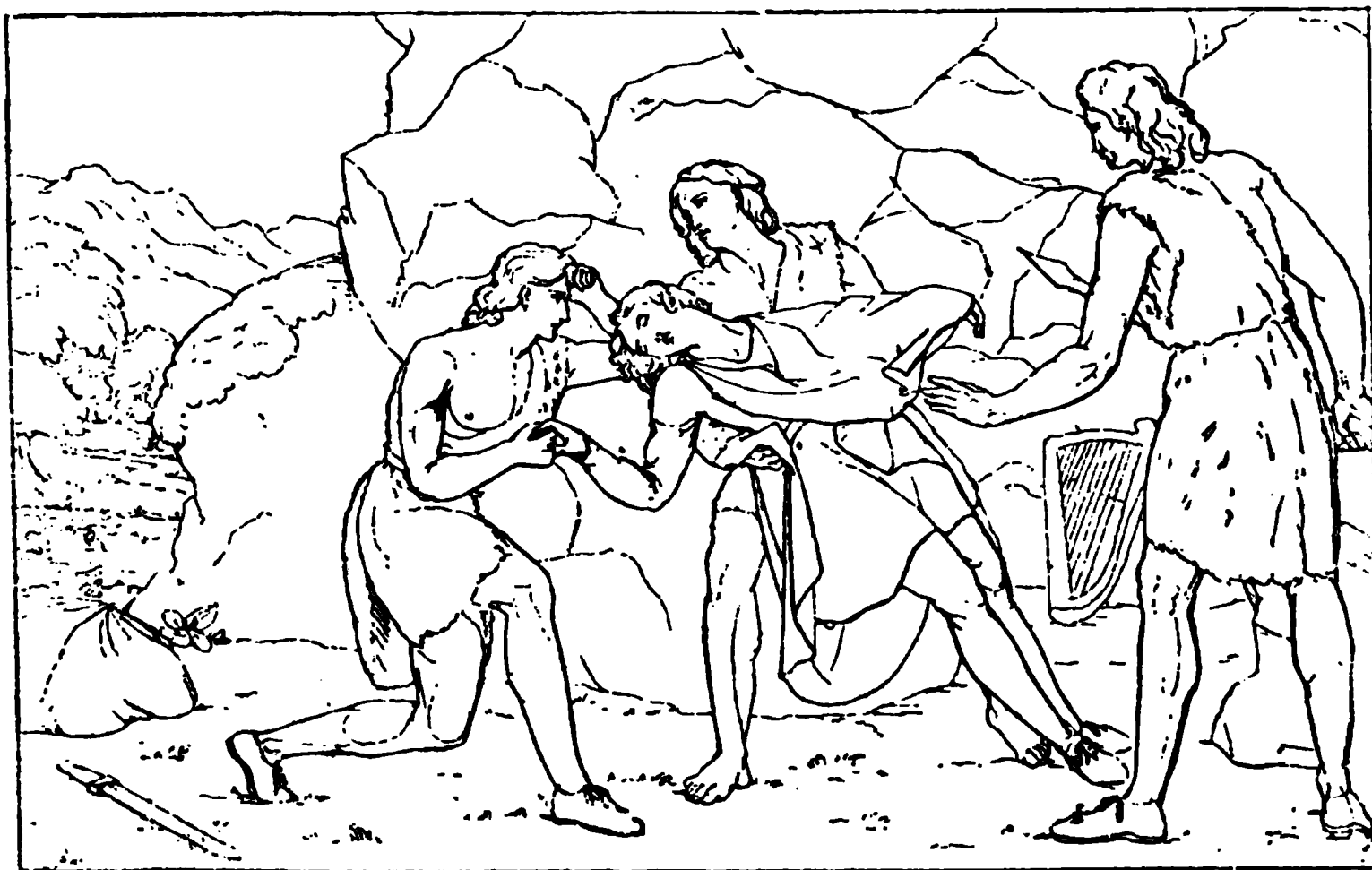


" They stopped at the entrance of the cave."

But when they refused her money Imogen thought they were very angry with her, and added that she should have died if she had not ventured to take the food.

Belarius then asked the name of their visitor ; and Imogen called herself Fidele, and told them that she had been travelling on to Milford Haven, there to meet a kinsman. At this, Belarius and the two youths bade Imogen welcome ; and when she helped

them to prepare their supper they marvelled at her skill, believing her to be a boy. Next time they went to hunt, Fidele excused herself from accompanying them because she was not well; and, indeed, grief had caused her indisposition, for her husband's unkindness had greatly distressed her. When she was left alone



"Then carrying her to a shady spot, the youths laid their unknown sister upon the grass."

Imogen drank the cordial Pisanio had given her, and soon sank into a deep sleep, in which she looked like one dead.

When the hunters came in, they believed their visitor was in a heavy slumber, and pulling off their shoes trod softly; but finding that there was no movement in the prostrate form, they began to lament over her as one dead. Then carrying her to a shady spot, the youths laid their unknown sister upon the grass, covering her with flowers and leaves, and went home very sorrowful.

But while Imogen was left alone, she awoke from the effect of her sleeping draught; and shaking off the leaves and flowers which had been thrown on her, rose up under the impression that she had been dreaming.

Not being able to find her way back to the cave, and seeing nothing of Belarius and his adopted sons, she began once more her weary pilgrimage towards Milford Haven, trusting to get thence to Italy, and, seeking Posthumus, regain his confidence and love.

All this time Imogen did not know that a war was going on between the Romans and the Britons, and that a party of the invaders, among whom was Posthumus, was advancing into the very forest through which she was making her way!

In coming thus to Britain, Posthumus desired not to fight against his own people. Unhappy at the thought of Imogen's falseness, grieving, too, over her death caused by his own order, he cared little whether he fell in battle or was condemned by Cymbeline for having left his place of exile.

Before Imogen reached Milford Haven she fell in with the Roman army, and had no difficulty in getting appointed page to one of their generals. Polydore and Cadwal (her unrecognized brothers) had now joined the king's army, little knowing he was their own father; and with them was Belarius, eager to fight although age was creeping upon him.

A great battle took place, in which the success of the Britons was due to the valour of the two forest youths, who rescued the king at a perilous moment, and thus turned the fortunes of the day.

Posthumus then gave himself up, as one who deserved punishment for having returned from banishment. Imogen and the general to whom she was page were also brought before Cymbeline as prisoners; as well as Iachimo, who had been in the Roman army. Strangely enough, as this little group stood in the royal presence awaiting their sentence, Belarius with Polydore and Cadwal came in, to be rewarded for their services; and Pisanio was present in attendance on the king. Imogen saw thus before her her lost husband; but he did not recognize her in her male attire. She saw also Iachimo; but she did not know it was he who had caused all her troubles, so she wondered to see on his finger her own diamond ring.

Pisanio knew his mistress, for it was he who had put her boy's apparel on her. Belarius and the two forest youths also saw it was the Fidele whom they believed dead.

Lucius, the Roman general, spoke first, declaring himself ready to die, but asking the life of his young page, who was a Briton. At this, Cymbeline looked earnestly at the fair youth, whom he little thought was his own daughter, yet whose face, he said, seemed familiar to him; moreover, it pleased him, and so he readily granted the request, and even gave the supposed page his permission to make one request of him.

Fixing her eyes on Iachimo, Imogen begged that he should be made to confess how he had obtained the ring which sparkled on his finger; and when Cymbeline commanded him to speak, the base man made a full acknowledgment of all his wicked plot, which had brought such sorrow upon Imogen. At this Posthumus started forward to own to the cruel sentence of death for the

gentle lady which he had intrusted to Pisanio, crying aloud, in his grief at the thought of her innocence and untimely end, "O Imogen! my queen, my life, my wife!"

No longer could Imogen bear to witness her husband's remorse, no longer could she suffer him to think her dead, and rushing forward in her page's dress she told him she was his own Imogen, who freely forgave him all the wrong he had done her!

Overcome with joy at finding his daughter, Cymbeline bestowed his pardon upon her husband; and also upon old Belarius, who thought this a fitting time to bring forward the two lads and declare them the king's sons, whom he had stolen in their infancy from motives of revenge.

Every one was happy—too happy to think of punishing even the wicked Iachimo, who knelt before the much-deceived Posthumus and bade him take his life.

"Kneel not to me," said Posthumus. "The power that I have on you is to spare you, the malice towards you to forgive you. Live, and deal with others better."

The bad queen was taken ill, and died more from despair than from any other cause, having failed in her wicked plans; and her son Cloten was slain in some miserable quarrel. But those who deserved happiness won it; and a peace was concluded between the Romans and the Britons which remained uninterrupted for many years; and these were the words in which Cymbeline proclaimed it: "Publish we this peace to all our subjects. Set we forward: Let a Roman and a British ensign wave friendly together."

VI.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

THERE were two noted families in the city of Verona, between which a deadly feud existed; so that if even a servant of the house of Montague met with a servant of the house of Capulet, a quarrel was certain to ensue, which not unfrequently ended in bloodshed.

A great supper was given by the old lord Capulet, to which all the nobles of Verona, with their ladies, were welcomed, excepting those of the noble house of Montague. Yet, in spite of the danger, the son of Lord Montague had gone there in disguise, hoping to see a fair lady, named Rosaline, whom he loved. It was at the instance of a friend that Romeo had gone to the banquet of the Capulets—a friend named Benvolio, who wished him to see that among the beauties of Verona, Rosaline was not so fair as he supposed her.

Well disguised, then, these two young men entered the palace accompanied by one Mercutio; and old Capulet bade them welcome, and set them to dance.

Presently Romeo observed among the dancers a lady whose

grace and beauty exceeded all he had ever imagined ; and as he spoke in praise of her to his friends, he was overheard by Tybalt, one of the Capulets, who recognized in his voice the tones of one of the hated Montagues.

Furious at the discovery, and that such a guest should have been admitted under the disguise of a mask, Tybalt would have



"Dressed as a pilgrim, he touched her hand."

struck Romeo dead if Lord Capulet had not prevented any injury being done, saying, that the tongues of Verona spoke of him as "a virtuous and well-governed youth."

After peace was restored between them (though Tybalt declared that Montague should repent his intrusion before long), Romeo sought the lady whose beauty had so much attracted him, and being dressed as a pilgrim, he touched her hand, calling it a

shrine which perchance a pilgrim's lips might be permitted to press. She replied that his devotion was too courtly for a pilgrim, and talked with him until her mother summoned her away. Then Romeo heard that she was the young Juliet, daughter of his greatest enemy.

This troubled him, yet he could not help loving the beautiful

" Juliet appeared at an upper window."

girl; and after he and his companion had left the banquet. Romeo remained in an orchard adjoining the garden of the Capulets, thinking of their meeting which had happened so unexpectedly.

As he mused thus, Juliet appeared at an upper window, looking more than ever beautiful in the moonlight; and as she gazed out, unconscious of Romeo's presence, she murmured, "O Romeo,

Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?" She too had felt a great admiration for the young stranger, and finding he was indeed one of the Montagues, she wished that he had borne any other name than that which she dared not love.

At this Romeo could not refrain from speaking, but by so doing he alarmed Juliet, until she recognized his voice; then she warned him of his danger should one of her family find him lingering near the house.

It was not long, however, before Juliet had promised herself in marriage to this noble youth; and with this promise they bade each other good-night.

Romeo did not go to his home when Juliet left the window; he betook himself to a monastery close by, there to seek counsel of one of the friars named Laurence. Early as it was, scarce day-dawn, the good father was at his devotions, but he patiently listened to Romeo's tale of love for Juliet. But Friar Laurence raised his hands in wonder when the young man begged that he would upon that very day perform the rite of marriage for them! However, as Romeo continued to urge, he agreed; for he thought such a union might put an end to the lamentable quarrel between the two families.

A trusty messenger was sent to Juliet, who did not fail to come to the friar's cell at the appointed hour, where they were united in marriage, with many prayers that the blessing of Heaven might rest upon them both.

As soon as the ceremony was over, Juliet hurried home; but Romeo promised to come to the garden when night drew on, so that they might talk with each other, as upon the previous evening.

About noon on that same day, Benvolio and Mercutio, who had been Romeo's companions at the Capulets' banquet, were met in the streets of Verona by the enraged Tybalt, and angry words were passing between them when Romeo himself came up.

Looking upon Tybalt now as the kinsman of his own beloved Juliet, Romeo tried to soothe his rage, but in vain; for drawing their weapons, Tybalt and Mercutio fought until Mercutio received a death wound. Then Romeo's temper could no longer be controlled; and rushing upon Tybalt, he caused him in his turn to fall. By this time tidings of the quarrel had spread to every quarter of the city, so that not only Capulets and Montagues, but the prince himself, arrived upon the spot to hear what had caused the affray.

Benvolio was first commanded to speak, but Lady Capulet, in her grief at the death of Tybalt, begged the prince to pay no heed to his words, but to punish Romeo; while Lady Montague pleaded for her son that he had done no ill in avenging himself upon the murderer of Mercutio.

The prince, having heard the case, passed sentence of banishment on Romeo; and this dread news was carried to the happy young bride, who waited with impatience for the moment when she should see her husband, according to his promise.

When she heard what had occurred, and that Romeo was banished from Verona, she shed bitter tears, although she rejoiced that his life had not been sacrificed to Tybalt's fury.

Meanwhile Romeo had sought refuge in the cell of Friar Laurence, and there he was when his sentence was made known to him. In his grief at a separation from Juliet, the young man

was like one beside himself, flinging himself on the ground, tearing his hair, and refusing to listen to the friar, who sought to console and encourage him.

In vain did the holy man bid him be thankful that he was alive, and that instead of death his sentence was but banishment. Romeo turned from such comfort, until the friar bade him beware, for all who gave themselves up to despair would surely die most miserably.

When Romeo became a little calmer, Friar Laurence advised him to go and bid Juliet farewell during the silence of the night, when none would discover and betray him, and then depart quietly to Mantua, there to remain until a fitting opportunity for making known his marriage should arrive.

It was with a heavy heart that Romeo parted with his bride; but he was forced to depart ere day dawned, lest he should be put to death in Verona.

Not many days after his departure, old Lord Capulet began to think of a suitable husband for Juliet; for he knew nothing of her secret marriage, and believed that Count Paris was a worthy suitor for her hand.

Juliet was in a great dilemma. She dared not say she was Romeo's wife, neither did she dare disobey her father; so her only resource was to remind her parents how young she was for marriage, and how unseemly any such festivity would be when Tybalt, their near kinsman, had been so lately killed.

But her excuses were of no avail. Lord Capulet declared he had found a husband whom any maiden of Verona might be

proud to wed, and that upon the following Thursday the marriage should take place.

Juliet knew no one who could help and counsel her but Friar Laurence, and to him she went in her great distress, declaring that she would rather die than be wedded to the Count Paris.

Now the friar had great skill in pharmacy, and thinking of a draught which he could concoct that would produce a sort of trance, and yet do Juliet no harm, he asked her if she had courage to undertake a remedy. Then he bade her go home and appear as cheerful as she could, and make no further resistance to her father's wishes; but on the next night she must drink the contents of the phial he gave her, and so upon the wedding morning they would find her apparently dead. She should thus be carried to the family vault and buried there; but in forty-two hours the effect of this draught would be gone, and before that time had passed, Romeo should be informed of what had been done, and he could come and rescue her from her living tomb, and carry her off to Mantua.

It was a terrible ordeal to pass through; but love for Romeo, and horror of the proposed marriage with Count Paris, gave Juliet courage to obey the friar's directions.

As she left the monastery she met the count, and no longer refused to be his bride. Old Lord Capulet was delighted at her sudden obedience to his will, and great preparations were made for the approaching marriage morning. On the Wednesday night Juliet drank the draught. She had many misgivings before she took it. Fear lest it might be poison was the first; but that passed, because she had long known the friar as a holy

man. Then she wondered if Romeo would really come for her; or whether the horror of awaking in a vault where the murdered Tybalt already lay would not turn her brain. These and others were the scruples and dreads which came to poor Juliet; but in the end she put the phial to her lips, and soon became quite insensible.



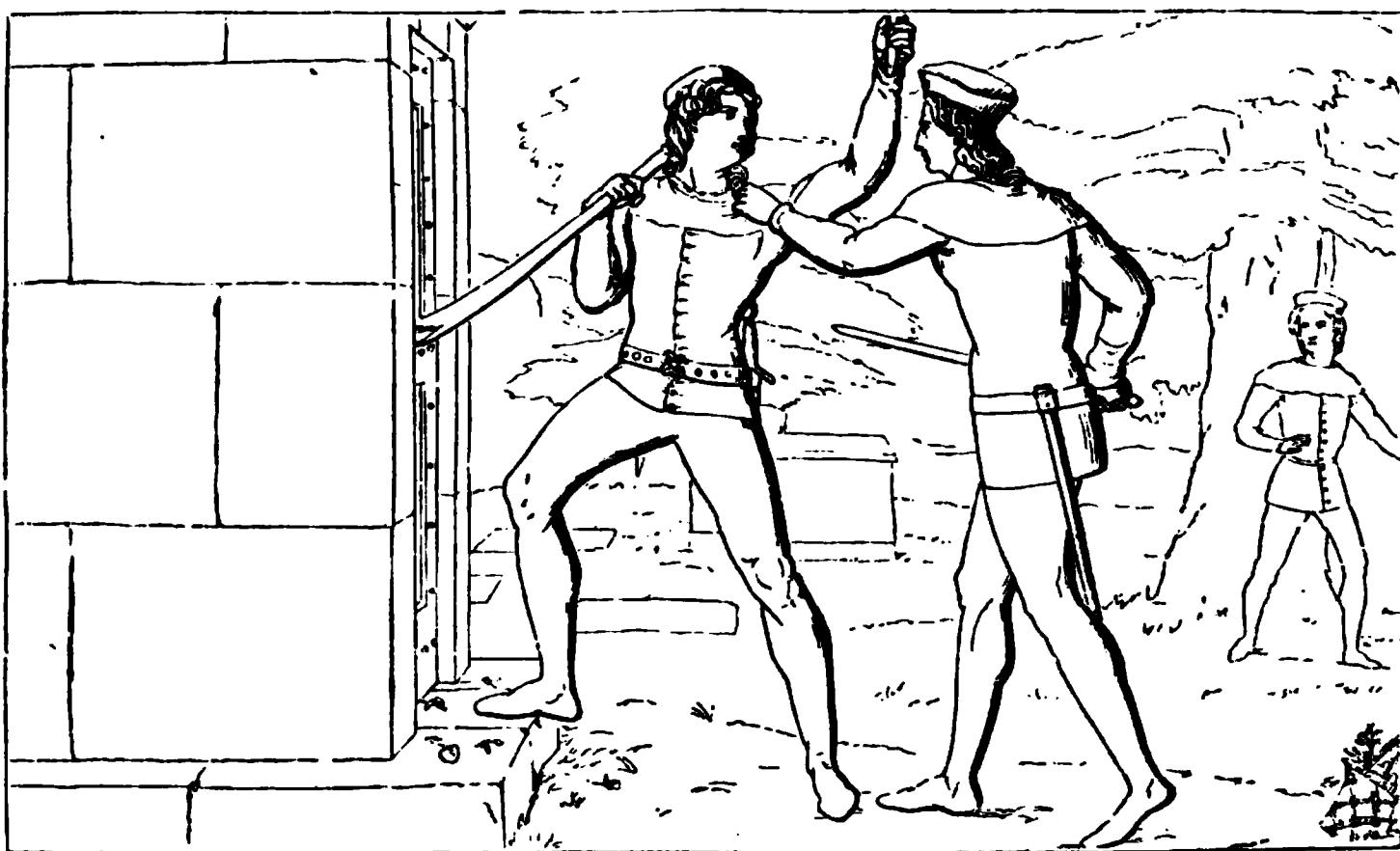
"Juliet was lying apparently a motionless corpse."

Early next morning Paris came to seek his bride; but Juliet was lying apparently a motionless corpse. Grievous were the lamentations of the count, and still more grievous the mourning of the bereaved parents and the old nurse who had tended the fair girl from her infancy.

Instead of a marriage there was a funeral, and dirges instead of bridal music; and the flowers which had been gathered for

the adornment of her beauty were now strewed upon her cold, motionless form.

Before the friar's messenger had reached Romeo with the real story of the mock death and funeral, he had heard that Juliet was no more; and ordering horses to be prepared, had started at once for Verona, determined to see his bride again, though it was in death.



"He was arrested by some voice calling him 'vile Montague.'"

But first he sought a poor apothecary, whom the sight of gold tempted to sell Romeo a strong poison; for the young man in his desperation resolved thus to seek death, since Juliet was lost to him.

It was midnight when he reached Verona and found the church-yard. He had obtained a light and a pick-axe, and was setting to work to open the monument, when he was arrested by some voice calling him "vile Montague."

It was Count Paris who spoke, and who had come at that hour to weep over the grave of his promised bride; and as he knew not of Romeo's love, and recognized him as one of the enemies of the house of Capulet, he naturally supposed his errand to be nothing but some dishonour to the remains of those who were buried there.

Romeo felt his passion rising, and warned Paris by the fate of Tybalt not to provoke him further; but the count persisted in his attempt to secure him, which resulted in a fight, and young Paris fell.

When Romeo found by the help of a light who it was that he had slain, he pressed the dead youth's hand, calling him a companion in misfortune, and said he should be buried in Juliet's grave.

Opening it at last, Romeo looked once more upon his lovely bride, still fair and blooming, as if death had not touched her with its icy finger. There too lay Tybalt in his blood-stained shroud; and at this sight Romeo knelt and implored pardon of the lifeless body; then raising to his lips the poison which he had obtained, he drank it off and died.

Meanwhile Friar Laurence heard that the messenger he had despatched to tell Romeo the news, had been detained on his way to Mantua, and thus had not seen the young man. Knowing that the forty-two hours were just expiring, and that Juliet would be awaking from her long sleep, the good man hastened to the monument, that he might set her free, and conceal her in his own cell until her husband should arrive. To his surprise he found the tomb open, and a light burning; but next moment he

beheld with horror the marks of bloodshed, and the lifeless bodies of Paris and Romeo.

Before he could exclaim at such a sight, Juliet awoke from the trance, and observing the friar, remembered all that had happened, and asked for Romeo.



"Juliet awoke from the trance."

The friar heard some noise, and said,—

“Lady, come from that nest
Of death, contagion, and unnatural sleep :
A greater Power than we can contradict
Hath thwarted our intents. Come, come away.”

But Juliet would not stir. With her own eyes she saw her husband dead, and the phial in his hand helped her to divine that he had swallowed a poisonous draught. The noise came

nearer; the friar fled in haste; but Juliet had one fixed purpose in her mind,—she too must die, for life without Romeo was impossible.

Touching his lips with her own, she hoped to receive some of the poison which remained upon them; then, as footsteps



"As footsteps approached, she unsheathed a dagger which he wore."

approached, she unsheathed a dagger which he wore, and stabbing herself fell prostrate by her husband's side.

The city watch had now arrived, for the page of Count Paris had spread an alarm in the streets of Verona, and Capulets and Montagues, with the prince himself, hastened to the tomb.

The friar had been found close by, and was now bidden to relate what had happened; so he told the story of Romeo and Juliet's love, their secret marriage, and tragic death. A servant who had

attended Romeo had letters in his keeping which were written by his master to Lord Montague, making good the story the friar had related, and setting forth his purpose to die by poison, and thus lie in death by the side of his bride.

So at the grave the breach was healed, and the two bereaved fathers clasped hands in friendship, the one declaring he would raise to Juliet's memory a statue of purest gold, the other promising the same honour to the name of Romeo.

VII.

H A M L E T.

WHEN Hamlet, King of Denmark, had been dead but two brief months, his widowed queen, Gertrude, so far forgot him as to unite herself in marriage with his own brother Claudio, a man inferior to him in appearance no less than in character. This act gave great displeasure to the people; the more so because it was rumoured that Claudio had secretly made away with his brother, that he might succeed to the throne by marrying his widow, and thus exclude the rightful successor—the young Prince Hamlet. This son of the dead king took his mother's conduct so much to heart that, in addition to sorrow for his loss, it threw him into a state of the deepest melancholy, so that he felt no pleasure in anything.

When the marriage took place, young Hamlet still appeared at court clad in the deepest mourning; nor could his mother and her new husband induce him to cast it off.

The prince was troubled also by uncertainty as to the cause of his father's death; he could not rid himself of the suspicion

that Claudio had in some way caused it, and he dreaded lest his mother might have been privy to the murder.

The soldiers declared, too, that while on watch in the dead of night the spirit of the departed king had appeared to them, clad in a suit of armour; that its face expressed grief, and that it had

"The ghost appeared, and beckoned to the young prince."

seemed about to address them, but the cock crew at the moment, upon which it disappeared.

Hamlet resolved to share the watch, hoping to see the spirit of his dear departed father also; for he believed that it would not thus appear to men unless it had something to reveal to them: so when night came he joined Horatio and Marcellus, whose duty it was to be on guard.

They had not waited long when the ghost appeared, and

beckoned to the young prince, as if desiring him to follow. The soldiers begged him not to do so ; but Hamlet cried,--

“ Why, what should be the fear ?
I do not set my life at a pin's fee ;
And for my soul, what can it do to that,
Being a thing immortal as itself ?
It waves me forth again : I'll follow it.”

When they were together the spirit spoke, and revealed to Hamlet the fact of the murder, and that it had been effected by Claudio, who during sleep had poured a poisonous juice into his brother's ears, which coursing through the body had destroyed his life. Then also did the ghostly visitant lament to his son that the queen should marry the murderer, but cautioned him to leave her to Heaven and the stings of conscience, even if he sought revenge against his wicked uncle.

When Hamlet was alone, he made a solemn vow to forget all he had ever known, all learning, all pleasure, and keep nothing in his memory but his father's ghost, and what it had revealed to him ; but the events of that night so disturbed his mind that he felt as one mad. He then resolved to feign real madness, that he might more easily form and execute some scheme of revenge against Claudio ; and so well did he act this part, affecting such wildness of speech and manner, that both the king and queen believed his reason was gone, and they fancied the cause of it must be the love of some fair lady. Now, before his troubles began, Hamlet had been much attached to Ophelia, the daughter of the king's chief counsellor, and rings had been exchanged

and presents given; but in his melancholy grief the prince had neglected the lady, and now in his feigned madness he began to treat her most rudely.

Coming to visit her thus, he had frightened her much, so that she ran to tell her father he must be mad, saying,—

“He took me by the wrist, and held me hard;
Then goes he to the length of all his arm,
And, with his other hand thus o’er his brow,
He falls to such perusal of my face
As he would draw it.”

When Polonius heard his daughter’s story, he bade her come with him to the king, and let him know the state of his step-son; and a letter Hamlet had written to Ophelia was shown, which every one considered must have come from the pen of a madman. Thus it ran:—

“Doubt thou the stars are fire;
Doubt that the sun doth move;
Doubt truth to be a liar;
But never doubt I love.”

Little did his friends imagine that Hamlet’s distressing state arose from his unhappiness in knowing that his father’s murderer sat on the throne of Denmark, and that he felt he could have no peace until he had avenged the crime.

However, the queen believed him mad for love of Ophelia, and she contrived to send for him, so that he might meet with her apparently by chance. As Hamlet approached, he talked thus to himself:—

“To be, or not to be ; that is the question :
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them !”

He then went on to speak of the

“Dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns.”

Ophelia addressed him, hoping that the queen was correct in thinking that her presence would bring him to his right mind ; but in his assumed character of madman, Hamlet talked so wildly to this lady, that she was more than ever alarmed and distressed when he retired, and exclaimed,—

“Oh, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown !
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword ;
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down !
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That sucked the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh.”

Though Hamlet was always thirsting for revenge, he was by nature so gentle that the thought of causing the death of a fellow-creature was terrible to him ; and, indeed, he sometimes did not feel sure that he had seen the spirit of his father, but

feared that it might be a delusion of the devil. He therefore resolved to have some surer ground than the commands of an apparition to act upon; and he was in this mind when some players came to the court who had previously delighted him greatly. Hamlet perfectly remembered the part one had taken, setting forth the murder of a certain king and the wild grief of



"Hamlet talked so wildly to this lady, that she was more than ever alarmed."

the queen; and as he thought of it all, there came into his mind a story he had heard of a murderer who, seeing his own crime acted on the stage, was even moved to confess it.

So Hamlet determined that the players should perform some scene similar to the murder of his father, and he would get Claudio to be present, and narrowly watch the effect produced on him. Not guessing that there was any scheme to entrap him,

the king consented to attend the play with the queen and the whole court; and Hamlet stationed himself close at hand. But when the actor came to the representation of the poisoning in the garden, Claudio called for lights, and, pretending sudden illness, left the theatre.

The prince was now convinced that the ghost had told him

"Claudio called for lights, and, pretending sudden illness, left the theatre."

truly, and he was revolving in his mind what steps to take, when Queen Gertrude sent for him to a private conference.

To this she had been prompted by Claudio, who wished her to represent to Hamlet that his conduct was a source of much displeasure to them both; meanwhile he concealed himself behind the hangings, to hear exactly what passed between the mother and the son. Gertrude began by speaking of Claudio as Hamlet's

father, who had been "much offended;" upon which the prince retorted: "Mother, you have my father much offended;" and after a few more sentences exchanged, the queen was rising to send the king or Polonius to her rebellious son, when Hamlet seized her by the wrist, forcing her to listen to him. She was terrified, and cried out, on which the king's voice behind the curtains was heard; and the young prince, drawing his sword, thrust it through the draperies, pretending it was some rat making a noise there. However, it proved not to be Claudio who was killed, but Polonius, the chief counsellor, who was also Ophelia's father; and Queen Gertrude cried out, "Oh me, what hast thou done?"—on which Hamlet openly reproached her with marrying his father's brother, and with other misdeeds, frightening her so much that she implored him to spare her. As they talked together, the ghost of the murdered king entered, and reminded Hamlet of his promised revenge; but it was not visible to the eye of the queen, who was alarmed by hearing her son converse, as it seemed, with nothing.

She thought it another proof of his madness; but Hamlet declared that he was no madman, and with tears he begged his mother to show respect to his father's memory.

This unpremeditated slaying of Polonius gave Claudio a pretext for banishing Hamlet from the kingdom; and pretending to take measures for his safety, this wicked king said he had letters of business to send to the English court, whereas they were but requests for the prince to be put to death as soon as he landed.

Hamlet, suspecting some treachery, got possession of the

letters, and put the names of the two courtiers who accompanied him in place of his own, and then re-sealed the papers.

Soon afterwards, pirates attacked the vessel, and Hamlet courageously rushed on board the enemy's ship alone, while the other made off, leaving him to his fate. However, the pirates treated the prince well, and put him on shore at the

"The ghost of the murdered king entered."

nearest port to Denmark, from whence Hamlet wrote to tell the king he was safe, and should have the honour next day of appearing before his majesty.

On reaching home, the first sight which met his eyes was a funeral, and it proved to be that of the lady Ophelia.

She, poor maiden, had been most unhappy since her father's death, and became, indeed, quite distracted with sorrow, so that

she would go about among the ladies of the court, giving them flowers, in a foolish, simple manner.

There was a brook by which she often wandered, gathering daisies, weeds, and other things, which she made into garlands; and one day she fell into the water and was drowned. So they were laying her in the grave when Hamlet arrived in Denmark;



"She would go about among the ladies of the court, giving them flowers."

though, as he watched, he did not at first know whose funeral it was, until he saw the queen, his mother, throw flowers into the tomb, saying, "Sweets to the sweet: farewell!" Then the brother of Ophelia leaped into her grave, declaring he would be buried with her—which action seemed so to arouse the old love in Hamlet's heart that he did the same; and Laertes, not recognizing who it was, began to struggle with him; but they were soon reconciled.

Though Claudio had failed in one scheme for taking the life of the prince, he thought of another, and one day he persuaded Laertes to challenge Hamlet to a trial of skill at fencing, whereat all the court should be present; but the wicked king bade Laertes prepare a poisoned weapon.

At first Hamlet was allowed to gain the advantage, though



"He persuaded Laertes to challenge Hamlet to a trial of skill."

presently Laertes made a deadly thrust at him; but Hamlet, seizing the weapon, inflicted on him a fatal wound. The king had made ready a poisoned draught, of which he purposed getting Hamlet to drink, should other means fail to despatch him; but just at the moment of her son's wound, the queen uttered a piercing shriek, for she had ignorantly drunk of the fatal draught, and died instantly. Suspecting there was some treachery going

on, Hamlet declared he would discover it,—for as yet the poison had not taken effect on him. On this, Laertes, with his last breath, confessed it all, and told the prince he had not half an hour to live, for nothing could destroy the effect of the venom within him. Hamlet, knowing that his end was at hand, turned on the false king and thrust him through, thus accomplishing the

"Hamlet....turned on the false king and thrust him through."

bidding of his father's spirit. Then he begged his faithful friend Horatio to tell his mournful story to the world; and so died, lamented by those who had hoped to see him one day in his rightful position, on the throne of Denmark.

VIII.

M A C B E T H.

DUNCAN, King of Scotland, had a near kinsman who was named Macbeth, a great and powerful lord, much esteemed for his courage and success in time of war. A great battle had been fought and gained; and Macbeth, with another Scottish general named Banquo, were returning from the field of victory, their way leading them across a wild and desolate heath. There they were stopped by the appearance of three weird, terrible figures, whose wild attire gave them an aspect scarcely human. These three witches had agreed to meet Macbeth thus; for a while before, while the thunder rolled, and the rain fell stormily, they had talked of it in a deserted spot where they made their plans.

“ When shall we three meet again,
In thunder, lightning, or in rain? ”

said the first; and the answer came from the second,—

“ When the hurlyburly’s done,
When the battle’s lost and won.”

Then said the third witch,—

“That will be ere the set of sun.”

So these unearthly-looking creatures waited the coming of Macbeth; and as he approached, the first saluted him as, “Thane (or lord) of Glamis;” the second called him, “Thane of Cawdor;”

“These three witches had agreed to meet Macbeth thus.”

the third said, “All hail, Macbeth! thou shalt be king hereafter!”

It was strange enough to this brave lord to find that these witches knew him, but still more strange to be thus addressed; for he had no prospect of ascending the throne, as the king had sons to succeed him. Then they turned to Banquo, and proclaimed him “lesser, yet greater” than Macbeth; “not so happy, but much happier.” This also was very mysterious.

But while the two generals were marvelling what it could mean, certain messengers came from King Duncan to confer the dignity of Thane of Cawdor upon Macbeth. This was so exact a fulfilment of one prophecy that he began to think the witches might be equally correct on all points, and that he really might soon reign over Scotland.



"She determined to secure greatness at any cost."

Macbeth had a bad and ambitious wife; and when he told her what the witches had promised him, she determined to secure greatness at any cost, even at the cost of Duncan's life!

The king was in the habit of paying visits to his nobles, and at this time he chose to stay in Macbeth's castle, bringing with him his sons Malcolm and Donalbain, and numerous retainers.

When Macbeth apprised his wife of the royal visit, she began to hint at her dark and evil purpose.

“ He that’s coming
Must be provided for, and you shall put
This night’s great business into my dispatch.”

The king was so much wearied with his journey that he was glad to retire early to rest. He had two attendants sleeping in his chamber, but their presence did not hinder Lady Macbeth from attempting his murder. She had won her husband’s consent to it; yet she feared his nature was not hard and cruel enough to commit the deed, so, with a dagger in her hand, she approached the sleeping king, having first given his grooms so much wine that they were completely stupified.

As she looked on Duncan’s face, something in its expression made this bad woman think of her own father, and her courage failed her; but her husband overcame his own fear, and entering the king’s chamber, quickly despatched him.

Next moment horror overtook him: one of the grooms stirred in his sleep, and murmured, “ God bless us,”—to which the other answered, “ Amen;” and Macbeth listened, shuddering. Then it seemed to him as if a voice cried, “ Sleep no more! Macbeth does murder sleep.”

Returning to his wife, the wretched murderer told her of these imaginations; but she ridiculed his weakness, and bade him wash the blood from his fingers, while she took the stained dagger and passed it across the cheeks of the still sleeping attendants, so that they might be suspected of taking the king’s life.

When morning came, Macbeth and his wife feigned violent grief at the fate of their king; and yet suspicion seemed to fall on them, although the bloody daggers, left by the side of the grooms, and the stain upon their cheeks, were pointed out. The



"Next moment horror overtook him."

sons of Duncan fled at once,—the elder to England, the younger to Ireland; and thus Macbeth was heir to the crown, and the prediction of the witches was fulfilled.

Though placed in so high a position, the remembrance of his crime haunted Macbeth by day and by night. Nor could he forget that the three weird sisters had declared that Banquo's children, not his own, should be kings after him; and both he and his queen resolved on another murder,—the murder of Banquo and his son.

To this end they made a banquet, inviting all the chief lords, and, of course, the two intended victims of the plot, who were to be attacked and stabbed on their way to the palace. Banquo was killed thus, but his son Fleance escaped; and while this evil



"'Let the earth hide thee!' he cried."

was being done, Macbeth was pretending to regret the delay of his dear friend and noble thane.

Just then the ghost of Banquo entered, and took the king's place at the table, so that coming into the supper room, he started and cried, "Which of you has done this?" No one else saw the spectre—for, indeed, it was but the creation of Macbeth's guilty conscience; and therefore the attendants cried, "What, my lord?" and marvelled that he did not advance to his seat.

"Prithee, see there! behold! look!" cried the terrified king. But then the ghost seemed to vanish, and recovering himself, Macbeth sat down, and was about to drink to the health of his guests, when the phantom reappeared to make him tremble.

"Avaunt, and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!" he cried; and though Lady Macbeth tried to explain that he had



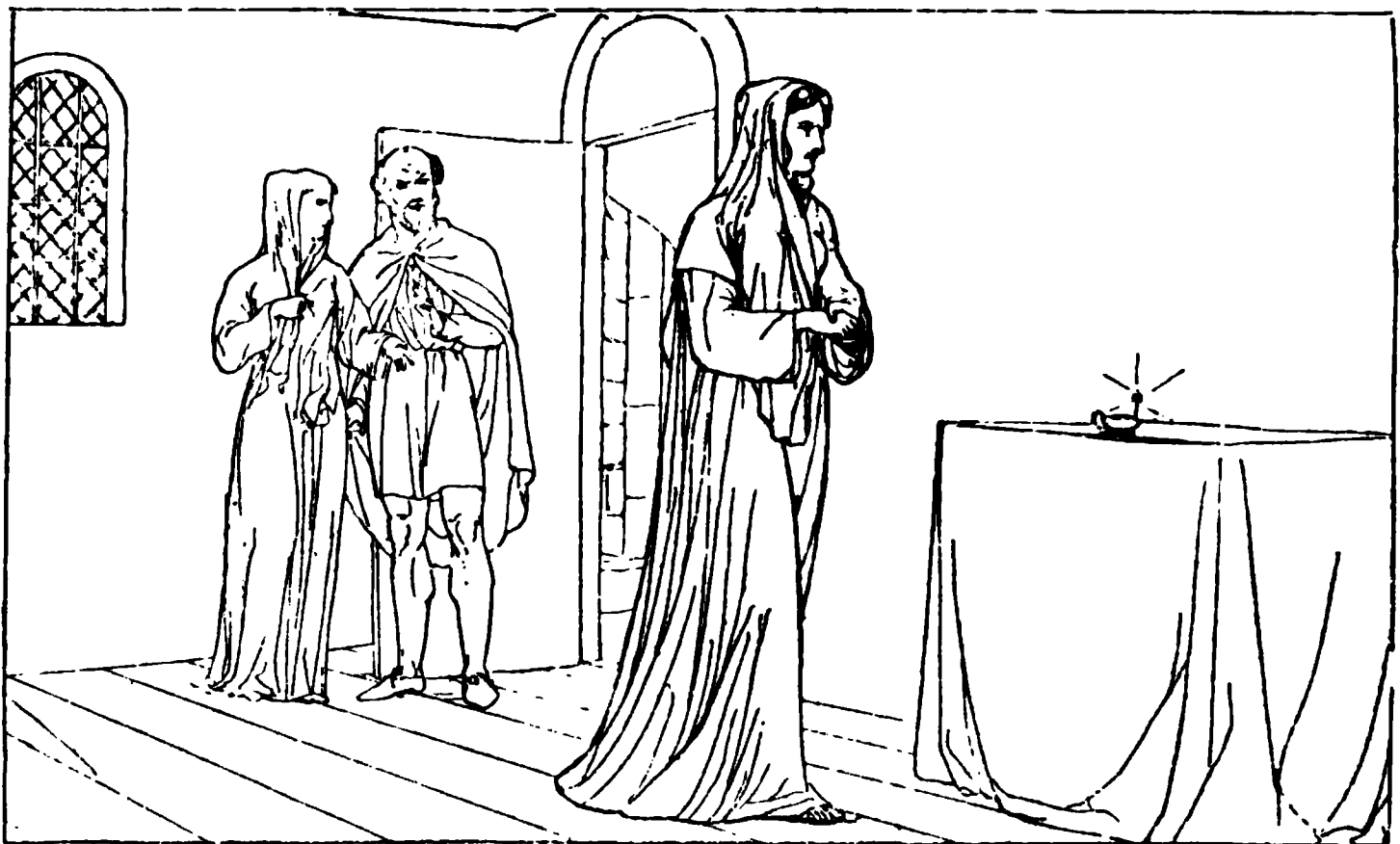
"Eight shadowy kings passed by."

ever been subject to these nervous fancies, she was in such fear lest the secret might be discovered that she hastened to dismiss the guests.

Macbeth was so miserable that he resolved to seek the three witches, and get from them some further knowledge of what would happen in the future.

When he came upon them in their cave, they were preparing

charms whereby to get the spirits of evil to grant them revelations; and the first of those spirits they summoned to answer Macbeth bade him beware of Macduff, Thane of Fife. The second evil spirit assumed the form of a child sprinkled with blood, and advised Macbeth to fear no one. The third took the shape of a crowned child, and said that Macbeth should not be vanquished until



"Suffering the keenest remorse."

"Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill
Shall come against him."

But there was one thing more the king longed to know, Should the murdered Banquo's son ever reign over Scotland?—and at this question the witches' caldron sank into the ground. There was a sound of music, and eight shadowy kings passed by; last of all Banquo, smiling on Macbeth, and pointing

to them. From this, Macbeth understood that these eight kings would be descended from his hated victim, and he left the cave with his mind full of dreadful thoughts.

The very first news which greeted him was that an army was being raised against him by Malcolm, the rightful heir; and that Macduff, Thane of Fife, had gone to England to join it. Upon this, Macbeth attacked the castle wherein Lady Macduff and her children were dwelling, and killed them and all their kinsmen. This deed turned the hearts of the noblemen against their king: many went over to join Malcolm, while those who remained in Scotland hated him so much that he passed his days in continual fear of being poisoned or otherwise made away with.

All this time Lady Macbeth was suffering the keenest remorse of conscience, and so disturbed was her mind that she would rise in her sleep and begin rubbing her hands, as if to take from them the bloody stain; and at length she died, as it was supposed, by her own act.

Macbeth felt now alone in the world, with no one in whom to confide, and life seemed so hateful that he cared not how soon it was over. When he heard that Malcolm was coming at the head of a powerful army, he shut himself up in his castle and waited. A messenger came to him there one day, declaring that as he had looked towards Birnam the wood began to move. Macbeth remembered that he was to fall when Birnam wood touched Dunsinane hill, and he was filled with fear; yet he cried,—

“Arm, arm, and out!

If this which he avouches does appear,
There is nor flying hence nor tarrying here.

I 'gin to be aweary of the sun,
And wish the estate o' the world were now undone.—
Ring the alarum-bell!—Blow, wind! come, wrack!
At least we'll die with harness on our back."

A desperate encounter followed, in which Macduff closed upon the guilty king, who had destroyed his wife and children and

"A desperate encounter followed."

kinsmen. After a sharp struggle Macbeth was overcome; and his head being cut off, it was presented to the young Malcolm, who, amidst the joyful acclamations of his people, ascended the throne, which was his rightful inheritance as the son of the good King Duncan the Meek.

IX.

KING LEAR.

LEAR, the aged King of Britain, had three daughters: Goneril, married to the Duke of Albany; Regan, wife of the Duke of Cornwall; and Cordelia, still unwedded, but for whose love the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy had both come as suitors to the British court.

Lear began to feel the care of the kingdom more than his failing strength could bear, and desiring to hand it over to those who were more fitted for its management, he resolved to discover which of his three daughters loved him best, so that he might divide his dominions in proportion to the affection cherished towards him.

For this purpose the aged king summoned his children to his presence, and beginning with Goneril, asked, "Which of you shall we say doth love us most?"

Goneril declared that to her her royal father was dearer than eye-sight, liberty, life itself; and King Lear was so delighted with her words that he instantly bestowed one-third of his possessions upon her and her husband.

Next came the turn of Regan, who was determined not to be outdone in words by her elder sister, and who declared that Goneril's affection fell far short of her own, for all joy was nought save that which she felt in having so dear a father.

The poor old king thought himself blessed indeed, in the possession of such fond children, and gave Regan as large a share of his kingdom as he had already bestowed upon Goneril.

At last he turned to his youngest daughter, Cordelia, who had always been his darling; but she, knowing the falseness of her sisters' professions, and seeing their purpose of getting as much wealth as they could, would not be like them, but quietly declared that she loved her father according to her duty, "not more, nor less."

King Lear was pained by this apparent coldness, and advised her,—

"Mend your speech a little,
Lest it may mar your fortune."

But Cordelia still refrained from any great protestations of love.

"So young, and so untender?" said the king, sorrowfully; to which she answered, "So young, my lord, and true."

At length Lear became so angry, that he gave to Goneril and Regan the portion he had reserved for Cordelia, keeping for himself only the name of king; and arranging that, with a hundred knights in attendance on him, he should be maintained alternately at his daughters' palaces for one month.

The courtiers were indeed amazed at such a disposal of his kingdom; but only the Earl of Kent was courageous enough to

plead for Cordelia, and he was commanded to be silent, under pain of death.

But the good earl was not so easily silenced, and declared,—

“Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least ;
Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound
Reverbs no hollowness.”

“ Only the Earl of Kent was courageous enough to plead for Cordelia.”

Then Lear pronounced sentence of banishment upon this faithful Kent, declaring that if at the end of six days he was found within the British realm, instant death should be his punishment.

The King of France and the Duke of Burgundy were now sent for, that they might hear that Cordelia had no fortune to bring to her husband. The duke at once declined to marry her ; but the King of France took her hand in his, and cried,—

“Fairest Cordelia, thou art most rich, being poor ;
Most choice, forsaken ; and most loved, despised.”

And then he bade her take farewell of her father and sisters,
and go with him to reign over France.

Lear would not bless her, his once loved child.

“Therefore be gone,
Without our love, our grace, our benison,”

were his parting words ; and he retired, leaving Cordelia to speak
with her sisters before she bade them a last farewell.

Before the old king had concluded his month's visit to his
daughter Goneril, he began to find out her deception ; for when
she met her father she frowned on him, and neglected proper care
of his comfort, and even permitted her servants to treat him with
contempt.

Meanwhile the Earl of Kent could not be happy apart from
his royal master ; and in the disguise of a servant he came to ask
permission to attend on him, assuming for that purpose the name
of Caius.

One day, when Goneril's steward treated the poor old king
with insolence, Caius threw him down ; and Lear felt from that
time that he was a faithful and affectionate servant.

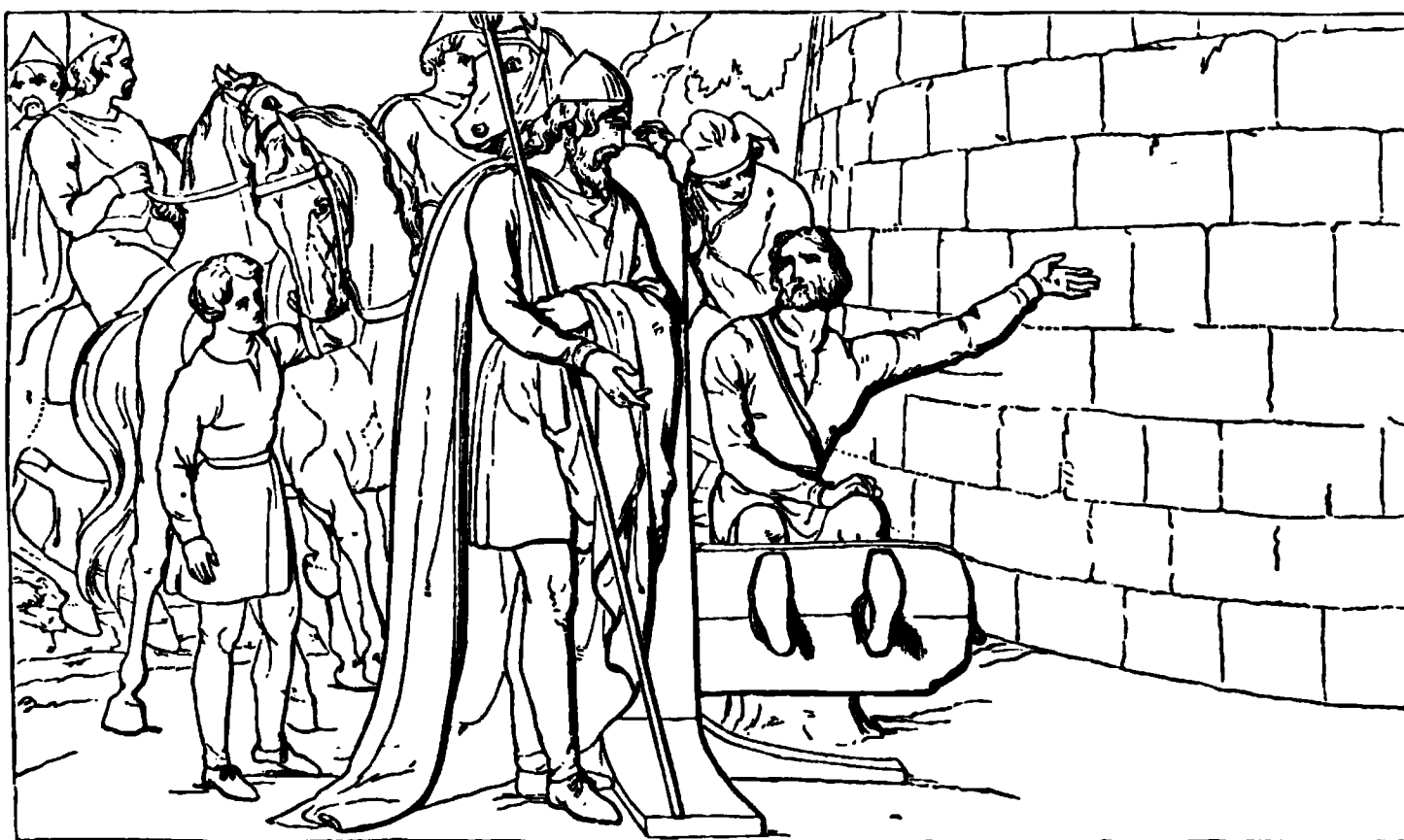
At length this unkind daughter plainly gave her father to
understand that she was weary of his company ; and she com-
plained of the number of his knights, saying that it was unneces-
sary for one of his age to have so many attendants.

At first Lear found it hard to believe that Goneril could treat

him so ungratefully; but when he found she was in earnest, he bade them prepare his horses, that he might depart to his other daughter, Regan; and in his bitterness of heart he cried,—

“How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is
To have a thankless child!”

It seemed to the old man that he had been unjust to his daughter



“This was the first sight which met the old king’s eyes.”

Cordelia, whose fault appeared but small now compared with that of her sister; and tears fell from his eyes as he thought of the past.

When he drew near the palace of Regan and her husband, King Lear sent a messenger forward to apprise them of his arrival; but already Goneril had despatched news of him to her

sister, and advised her not to receive all the attendants he was bringing with him. The messenger from Goneril chanced to be none other than the steward whom Caius had once thrown down for showing insolence to Lear, and meeting now, they got to blows: this being told to Regan, she ordered her father's faithful servant into the stocks. This was the first sight which met the old king's eyes as he entered the castle, and it roused his anger; but still worse was it to be received with a message that Regan and her husband were weary with travelling, and could not see him.

At his demand that they should come and receive him, they reluctantly appeared in company with Goneril, who had hastened forward to tell her own story, and cause enmity between her sister and her father.

Instead of rejoicing as a loving daughter to entertain him, Regan advised Lear to go back with Goneril, and dismiss half his attendants at her desire; after which he could come to her, for just then she was not prepared to entertain him.

Violently the old king reproached her, declaring that he would rather seek a pension of the King of France than return to Goneril with half his train cut off.

Then Regan declared that, for her part, she would receive but five and twenty of the knights; while Goneril cried,—

“What need you five and twenty, ten, or five?”

And thus they wounded the heart of the old father, who had given up the whole of his kingdom to them, and who now seemed likely to be deprived of all shelter. Night came on, and as both ladies persisted in their resolution not to receive their

father's train, he called for his horses, caring not that a violent storm was raging, and that for many a mile there was not even the shelter of a bush. No one was now left with King Lear but his fool or jester; but Caius followed him, and at length persuaded him to enter a wretched little hovel on the open heath. A poor mad beggar was sheltering there; and seeing his misery,



"Violently the old king reproached her."

the old king began to fancy that he also must have had ungrateful daughters, who had brought him down to misery; and other signs also did he give of not being quite in his right mind, by reason of the sorrow which had come to him through Goneril and Regan.

The Earl of Kent, with some few of the knights who were still faithful to Lear, removed him to the Castle of Dover; and

then himself crossed the sea to France, to tell Cordelia of her father's pitiable state. Now, indeed, was the affection of that good daughter proved; for she begged her husband to permit her to start for England, taking a sufficient army with which to subdue her cruel sisters and their husbands.

During the faithful earl's absence, Lear had managed to

"Dressed up with wild-flowers, and perfectly mad."

escape from the castle, and was found by some of Cordelia's train wandering about the fields, dressed up with wild-flowers, and perfectly mad.

They tried to lay hands upon him, while they told him his daughter had arrived in England; but he fancied they were taking him captive, and began to run away.

Ah! it was a pitiful sight to look on; and when the poor

crazed king felt Cordelia's arms about his neck, he begged the bystanders not to laugh at him because he fancied she was his daughter!

But going back to Lear's unnatural children, we must tell that a violent jealousy arose between them, and Goneril found means to destroy her sister with poison, and afterwards she put

"It was a pitiful sight to look on."

an end to her own life; and thus the judgment of Heaven fell upon them both. But the armies they had sent out under the Earl of Gloucester were victorious, and the innocent Cordelia died in prison. When the poor old king looked on her lifeless form, he fell into a swoon; and thus his spirit passed away And the faithful Kent exclaimed,—

"The wonder is, he hath endured so long."

X.

OTHELLO.

HERE dwelt in former times in Venice a most fair and gentle lady called Desdemona, who was sought by many a suitor, for she was not only virtuous and beautiful, but possessed of considerable riches. Strange, indeed, it seemed that amongst so many who asked her hand, Desdemona should see no one to whom she could give her love; but the secret was that she cared for a Moor who often visited the house of Brabantio her father.

Othello, the Moor, was a brave soldier. He had risen to be a general in the Venetian service, and he had many qualities which would recommend him; but, unfortunately, because he was black, no one would deem him worthy of Desdemona for his bride. He had travelled much, and when he told the history of his adventures, of the battles and sieges he had taken part in, his narrow escapes by land and sea, and how, being made prisoner, he had been sold for a slave, Desdemona listened eagerly, and shed many a tear for his sufferings.

After a while the love of Desdemona grew so strong that she

consented to a secret marriage; but the news of it came to the ears of Brabantio, who was most indignant, and charged Othello with gaining her affection by some spells or witchcraft.

It was just at this time that the Moor's services were required by the state, for the Turks were bent on gaining the island of Cyprus, then held by Venice; so that, at the same moment that

"Desdemona listened eagerly."

he was charged with this unlawful influence over Desdemona, he was needed for a most responsible position in the defence against the enemy.

When called to answer the accusations of Brabantio, the Moor gave the plain story of his love for Desdemona, and how it had originated; and when he had finished, the Duke of Venice, who was the chief judge, said that no arts had been used save those

which all men honestly employ to gain a lady's ear. Desdemona herself was called for a witness, and professing her duty to her father she said,—

“But here's my husband,
And so much duty as my mother showed
To you, preferring you before her father,
So much I challenge that I may profess
Due to the Moor, my lord.”



“Brabantio could not but give his daughter to her husband.”

Brabantio could not but give his daughter to her husband, though he said he would gladly have kept her from him. When this was settled, Othello undertook the arrangement of the war, leaving Desdemona to follow him under the charge of a young soldier called Michael Cassio.

This Cassio had just been promoted to a place of trust in the

army, which had greatly offended one of the older officers, named Iago, who resolved in some way to make enmity between him and Othello.

The vessel containing Desdemona arrived first at Cyprus; but Othello was not long delayed, and found her anxiously awaiting him, and there was a great festival in the island in honour of his coming. That night Cassio had the supervision of the guard, with strict orders from Othello to keep the soldiers from any excess in drinking; and Iago knowing this, deemed it a good opportunity for setting his mischievous schemes on foot.

For this purpose he sought the company of the young officer, and in apparent good-nature pressed wine on him until he was over-excited, and easily led to talk loudly in praise of Desdemona. Then some other man was set on by Iago to provoke him—the end of which was a scuffle, which led to a general riot. This was just what Iago had desired; and ringing the alarm-bell of the castle, which was only done in some extreme danger, Othello was brought to the spot, and demanding to know the truth, heard of Cassio's offence, and took from him his lieutenant's post.

When Cassio recovered from the effect of the wine he had taken, he began to mourn over his weakness, and declare that he was undone, for he durst not beg the general to take him into favour again. Iago pretended to console him, and suggested that he should ask the lady Desdemona to plead his cause, for her good offices were certain to gain him his former place of trust. He further offered to bring about the interview, which he could easily do, because his wife was in attendance on Desdemona; to which the unsuspecting Cassio replied,—

"I humbly thank you for't.
I never knew a Florentine more kind and honest."

Desdemona having listened to the young soldier's petition, readily undertook to speak for him, as he had always stood high in her favour; and then, hearing Othello coming, he hastened to



"Othello was brought to the spot."

withdraw, pressing his lips on her hand in token of his gratitude for her kindness.

"Was not that Cassio parted from my wife?"

said Othello to Iago, who was by his side, and who at once tried to put a suspicious thought into his general's mind by suggesting that surely Cassio would not steal guiltily away at his approach.

Desdemona came to meet her lord, and began at once pleading

for the offender; nor would she be put off by any excuse, so that Othello promised pardon, although he said the time of granting it must be left to him. Thus far all was well; but the wicked Iago began to put false ideas before Othello when alone with him, and roused his displeasure by hinting that Cassio and Desdemona liked each other too well.



"He hastened to withdraw, pressing his lips on her hand."

Having made Othello very angry, this vile man immediately cautioned him against jealousy, and advised that he should put off his reconciliation with Cassio just a little longer, and in the meanwhile watch both him and Desdemona narrowly.

Though the general agreed to be patient, his peace of mind was gone, just as Iago had intended. One moment he thought Desdemona faultless, the next he doubted her, and then he

wished that this hateful suspicion had never been whispered to him.

Iago's next step was to steal a handkerchief belonging to Desdemona, drop it where Cassio was sure to pick it up, and then hasten to tell Othello it had been a gift from his wife to the young officer. Othello at once sought Desdemona, and asked for that handkerchief to bind about his temples, for his head ached; and when she could not find it he grew very angry, because it had been his own present, and had belonged first to his mother. Quite unconscious of what Iago had put into his mind, Desdemona began talking to her husband of Cassio, and again begged for his pardon; upon which Othello broke into such a storm of rage that she was quite frightened.

When he left her in anger, she begged Iago to tell her what she could do to regain her husband's favour.

"O good Iago,
What shall I do to win my lord again?
Good friend, go to him; for, by this light of heaven,
I know not how I lost him."

Iago pretended that it was too light a matter to cause the lady any sorrow.

"'Tis but his humour:
The business of the state does him offence,
And he does chide with you."

Upon which this gentle lady began to reproach herself for judging Othello unkindly.

When Desdemona met her lord again, he called her to him,

that he might look into her eyes, and read there if she loved him truly.

But the cruel doubts which the wicked Iago had implanted could not thus easily be destroyed; and Othello broke out into bitter lamentation:—



"When Desdemona met her lord again, he called her to him."

"Had it pleased Heaven
To try me with affliction; had they rained
All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head,
Steeped me in poverty to the very lips,
Given to captivity me and my utmost hopes,
I should have found in some place of my soul
A drop of patience."

And then he went on to say that Desdemona had brought scorn and shame on him.

When the fair lady had gone to her apartment to prepare for rest that night, she began a mournful song, which she said would not go from her mind, and which a maiden of her mother's sung when she was dying:—

“The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,
Sing all a green willow;
Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,
Sing willow, willow, willow;
The fresh streams ran by her, and murmured her moans;
Sing willow, willow, willow;
Her salt tears fell from her and softened the stones;—
Sing willow, willow, willow.”

Then she bade Emilia, her attendant (and who knew nothing of Iago's wicked schemes), good-night, and soon fell asleep.

While she slept, Othello came into the chamber with the intent to kill her; but she looked so fair, so calm, so pure, that he could not bear to shed her blood, although he did not shrink from his purpose of putting her to death. Bending over her, he pressed a last kiss on her lips, for he could not forget how fondly he had once loved her; and this roused the poor lady, and starting up she cried, “Who's there? Othello?”

“Have you prayed to-night, Desdemona?” he asked; and she answered, “Ay, my lord.”

Then said Othello,—

“If you bethink yourself of any crime
Unreconciled as yet to Heaven or grace,
Solicit for it straight.”

Such words alarmed Desdemona, and she asked what their

meaning might be; and Othello told her she should die, and began making false accusations against her. In vain she pleaded her perfect innocence; in vain, too, did she beg for mercy; seizing the bed-coverings, her angry husband dragged them over her head and stifled her.

Already he had given orders for Cassio to be put to death, and



"Othello came into the chamber with the intent to kill her."

when at that moment he heard the voice of Emilia calling, "My lord, I would speak a word with you," he believed she had come to tell him what had happened to the young officer, and therefore unlocked the door.

But Cassio was not dead, only bleeding from the wounds received from the man who had tried to assassinate him, and whom he had killed in the struggle; and as Emilia told this, Desdemona's

feeble voice was heard murmuring, "A guiltless death I die." Rushing to her mistress, Emilia found her drawing her last breath, for Othello had not done his cruel work so completely as he intended; but she in dying tried to make believe that it was by her own hand, for she would not throw the guilt upon her husband.

"Stabbed her in his rage at being found out."

Emilia was not deceived, and she cried aloud, "Help! help! the Moor hath killed my mistress!" and several lords came hurrying in to hear what had happened.

Othello began to tell what Iago had made known to him of Desdemona's affection for Cassio, and he related the story of the handkerchief. But Emilia could not be silenced, and she related how it had been stolen by the desire of her own husband Iago,

who, rushing forward, stabbed her in his rage at being found out. Further proof was to follow; for certain letters were found in the pockets of Roderigo, who had attempted Cassio's murder, and these so plainly set forth that young officer's innocence and Iago's crime, that Othello saw he had murdered his wife without any cause of offence. The discovery of her perfect innocence filled



"He thrust himself through with his own sword."

him with such unutterable remorse that he thrust himself through with his own sword, and falling by the side of the lifeless Desdemona, expired.

Nothing remains to tell but that Iago was condemned to incur the utmost severity of the laws of the state, while every one mourned the end of their brave general. Just before dying, Othello spoke these last words:—

“I pray you, in your letters,
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me as I am ; nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice : then must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely but too well ;
Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought
Perplexed in the extreme ; of one whose hand,
Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe ; of one whose subdued eyes,
Albeit unused to the melting mood,
Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinal gum.”

XI.

TIMON OF ATHENS.

FRIENDS and strangers were alike welcome in the house of Timon of Athens. At his table rich men assembled, and from it the poor were liberally fed ; for he poured out his wealth upon all sorts and conditions of men with generous hand.

If some poet desired to see the work of his imagination well received in the world, he had but to dedicate it to the lord Timon ; if a painter needed to dispose of some picture, it was sufficient if he took it to the great man's house ; and thus he was always beset with a crowd of needy persons, who flattered him exceedingly, in the hope of winning favour, and even seemed to worship him as if he were a god.

But rich as Timon was, his could not be a wealth which had no limit ; and his honest steward Flavius grew uneasy, and, placing his accounts before him, besought him to look into the state of affairs.

But Timon always had some excuse for not listening. Having wherewithal to indulge his love of spending, he would not admit the thought that poverty might follow such prodigality.

When the gorgeous rooms were blazing with light and filled with guests, when wine was even running upon the floor unheeded as the feasting went on, this steward would go out of the sight of such waste, and reflect upon the impending ruin,—when his master would realize the worthlessness of the friends who loved not him, but his possessions.

At last came a time when money was wanting, and Flavius had no more land to sell to meet the demand; nay, not enough to pay even the half of his master's debts.

Timon was startled now. "My lands extended from Athens to Lacedæmon," he said.

"Oh, my good lord, the world is but a word; were it all yours to give it in a breath, how quickly were it gone," replied Flavius, and he began to weep.

Timon could not bear to see his worthy steward thus troubled. He said:—

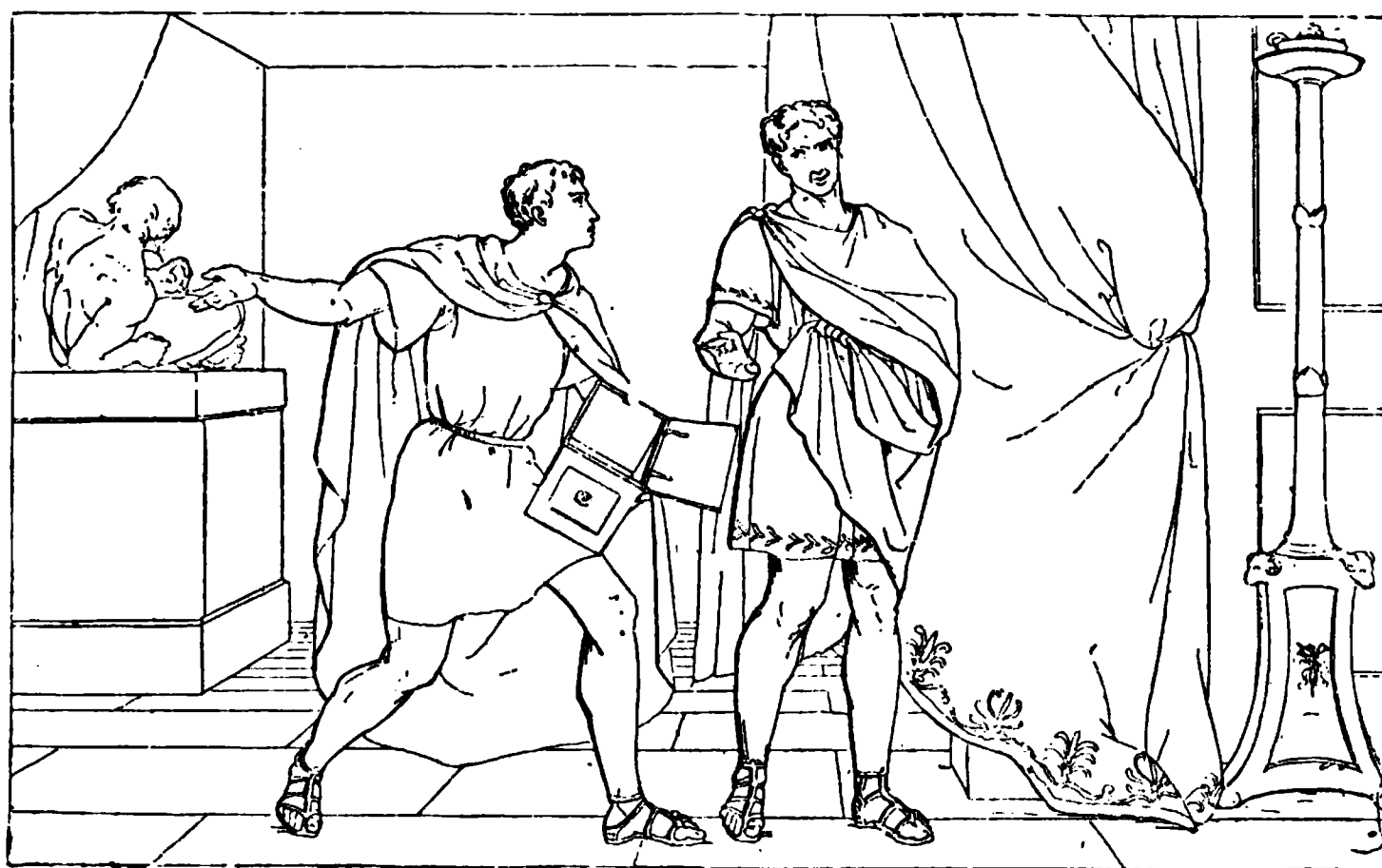
"Why dost thou weep? Canst thou the conscience lack,
To think I shall lack friends? Secure thy heart;
If I would broach the vessels of my love,
And try the argument of hearts by borrowing,
Men and men's fortunes could I frankly use
As I can bid thee speak."

Thus infatuated with the belief that the friends he had made would be friends also in adversity, Timon sent messages to several of those upon whom he had bestowed the greatest benefits, asking them to repay him a portion of what he had paid for the satisfaction of their debts.

Lucullus was the first applied to; but when the messenger

explained his errand, he declared that he had always foreseen Timon's ruin, and had attended his banquets only in the hope of having an opportunity to warn him of the danger of his excessive bounty; and at length he bribed the servant to return to his master, saying Lucullus was not at home.

Lucius was the next, and he affected to be greatly distressed



"He declared that he had always foreseen Timon's ruin."

that he could not serve Timon, having made, only the day before, so large a purchase that he had exhausted his own means.

As with these men, so was it with all to whom Timon made application; and the very tongues which had been loudest in his praise were now loudest in censuring his extravagant folly.

No one cared to enter the mansion of the once wealthy man, except clamorous creditors; no one stopped now to drink his wine

or eat at his table: it was a place to be shunned by all who had once thronged the door.

In this apparently desperate case, the lord Timon suddenly astonished the people of Athens by issuing invitations to a grand banquet. Lucius, Lucullus, and the rest were there, all exceedingly anxious to please Timon, whom they now believed to have been feigning poverty to try their friendship. Many apologies they offered, many were the expressions of regret that they had been unable to oblige him at the moment he made the request; but Timon bade them think no more of such a trifle.

So the banquet was served with great state; but when the dishes were uncovered, there were none of the dainties with which Timon had been wont to feast his friends,—only a little warm and smoky water met the eyes of the company; and, sprinkling them with it, their host denounced them as “most smiling, smooth, detested parasites.”

There was great confusion; lords and ladies hurried out one over the other, Timon following them with reproaches and abuse, so that gowns, caps, and even jewels were lost in the hurry of their escape from the mock banquet.

Timon now bade farewell to the city, and went out into the woods, living there more like one of the brute creation than a human being, eating wild berries and roots, drinking water, and flying from the face of mankind.

One day, when digging for roots, he discovered a great heap of gold, which, probably, some miser had hidden there; but the sight of that which he had once loved was hateful in Timon's eyes, and he would have shovelled it back into the earth,

had he not reflected on the misery it might cause some other man.

Some soldiers were just then passing through the wood, led by their captain, Alcibiades, and upon him Timon bestowed the gold, that he might pay his soldiers with it, asking in return that he would destroy Athens and its faithless, false inhabitants. He

"Upon him Timon bestowed the gold."

even begged that little children might not be spared, for they would grow up to be traitors; and that the cries of mothers, babes, maidens should not prevent the massacre of all in the city.

Thus he lived on in a forlorn state, when he was surprised one day by the appearance of a man standing at the entrance of his cave. It was Flavius, his own faithful servant, who had long

sought his master in vain. Seeing Timon in such a miserable condition brought tears to the eyes of Flavius, and for a moment he stood speechless with horror.

“Away! what art thou?” cried Timon.

“Have you forgot me, sir?”



“Seeing Timon in such a miserable condition brought tears to the eyes of Flavius.”

“Why dost ask that? I have forgot all men; then, if thou grant'st thou'rt a man, I have forgot thee,” was the reply.

“An honest, poor servant of yours,” pleaded Flavius.

“Then I know thee not. I ne'er had an honest man about me.”

But at last the good steward was able to convince Timon that the world did contain one honest man; and he begged to remain with him, but in vain.

“If thou hatest curses,
Stay not ; fly, whilst thou art blest and free :
Ne’er see thou man, and let me ne’er see thee.”

This was Timon’s answer ; and so they parted.

But other visitors were to follow. The Athenian lords began to repent of their unkindness to Timon, and a few were chosen



“He told them to trouble him no more.”

to go to him, and entreat him to spare the city, which was being besieged by the powerful Alcibiades, in fulfilment of his agreement with Timon, when the gold was paid over to him. With tears, with prayers, they try to move him to pity Athens ; riches, power, public love and honour, they offer him, in the name of their fellow-citizens, if only he will return and save them from their oppressors.

But Timon cared not that his countrymen should perish ; he

cared not if the fair city were utterly destroyed; and thus he told them to trouble him no more.

However, as they were leaving, he said that he would still show one kindness to his former friends; he would point out to them a certain method of ending their sufferings; and then he invited all who would, to come and hang themselves upon a tree growing near to his cave, and thus bid farewell to their many troubles and afflictions.


Finding all entreaty useless, the senators turned to depart, while Timon cried,—

“Come not to me again : but say to Athens,
Timon hath made his everlasting mansion
Upon the beach'd verge of the salt flood ;
Which once a day with his emboss'd froth
The turbulent surge shall cover : thither come,
And let my grave-stone be your oracle.”

They understood his meaning some few days later, when a poor soldier passed along the beach, not far from the woods where he had made his solitary dwelling, and found there, by the edge of the sea, a tomb whereon was written the name of Timon, the man-hater.

XII.

KING JOHN.

N those old times when John was on the throne of England, there came a day when, seated in one of the apartments of Northampton Palace, he gave an audience to Chatillon, the ambassador of the King of France.

Queen Elinor, the sovereign's mother, was there, and some of the counsellors, besides the officers and soldiers of the royal court, before whom now Chatillon prepared to deliver his important message:—

“ Philip of France, in right and true behalf
Of thy deceased brother Geoffrey's son,
Arthur Plantagenet, lays most lawful claim
To this fair island and the territories,—
To Ireland, Poictiers, Anjou, Touraine, Maine,—
Desiring thee to lay aside the sword
Which sways usurpingly these several titles,
And put the same into young Arthur's hand,
Thy nephew and right royal sovereign.”

Though John knew himself an usurper, he was in nowise intimidated by such a message; and in reply he said,—

“What follows if we disallow of this?”

Chatillon told him that the King of France would then make war upon him; but John said he could give “war for war,” and so bade him return whence he came.

Then spoke Queen Elinor, declaring she had always foreseen that Constance, the widow of Geoffrey, would never rest until she had induced the King of France to assert the rights of her young son, and blaming John because he had not prevented it by maintaining friendship with her.

Meanwhile the King of France awaited with some impatience the answer from England; for Chatillon was detained by adverse winds, and returned not until King John had made ready for war, and was already on his way to Angiers.

Even as the ambassador spoke, the drums were heard heralding the approach of the English, and presently the two kings confronted each other.

“Peace be to France, if France in peace permit
Our just and lineal entrance to our own!”

exclaimed King John; but he added,—

“If not, bleed France, and peace ascend to heaven,
Whiles we, God’s wrathful agent, do correct
Their proud contempt that beats His peace to heaven.”

The King of France replied by asserting that he loved England, but that, because it was the right of Geoffrey, the elder brother (and therefore, now he was dead, of Geoffrey’s son), he was re-

solved to fight for the weak, and dethrone, if possible, an unlawful king.

“Alack, thou dost usurp authority,”

cried John; but Philip of France answered,—

“Excuse ;—it is to beat usurping down.”

Elinor had accompanied her son upon his journey, and bitter

“Bitter words now passed between her and the young Arthur’s mother.”

words now passed between her and the young Arthur’s mother; but Lewis, the Dauphin, bade them cease, and called upon King John to lay down his arms, and resign to Geoffrey’s son his rightful inheritance.

As the English king remained immovable in his decision, the

citizens of Angiers were called by the sound of the trumpet to assemble, and declare whose title they would admit, for they held the town for the crown of England.

“Till you compound whose right is worthiest,
We, for the worthiest, hold the right from both”—

was their reply. Upon which both kings called their soldiers to arms, and a contest ensued.

It was not, however, a decisive one, for it seemed that strength and power were equally matched; so that it would have recommenced, had not the citizens bethought themselves of a means by which peace might be secured. And it was this: Blanch of Castile, the niece of King John, was a fair and lovely princess, so fair, that of her it was said,—

“If lusty love should go in quest of beauty,
Where should he find it fairer than in Blanch?
If zealous love should go in search of virtue,
Where should he find it purer than in Blanch?
If love ambitious sought a match of birth,
Whose veins bound richer blood than Lady Blanch?”

It seemed, then, to the chief inhabitants of Angiers, that the best way of reconciling the two opponents was, to give the hand of Blanch in marriage to the French dauphin, that so John should be united to Philip by the ties of relationship.

Even the old Queen Elinor was satisfied, and begged her son to entertain this project; so it was settled, and the fair lady's uncle declared that he would give up many of the territories he held in France as a dowry for her.

In the general satisfaction caused by this proposed marriage, the King of France had forgotten Constance, and his promise to fight in the interests of her young son. When he remembered her, he cried,—

“Brother of England, how may we content
This widow lady? In her right we came;
Which we, God knows, have turned another way
To our own vantage.”

“Whose veins bound richer blood than Lady Blanch?”

King John, however, thought it a matter which might be very easily arranged, and declared that all ill feeling could be healed by making young Arthur Duke of Bretagne, Earl of Richmond, and Lord of the “fair town” of Angiers.

But the ambition of Constance was not so easily satisfied;

and when she heard what had been done, she at first refused to believe the tidings, crying, when assured of its truth,—

“ Oh, if thou teach me to believe this sorrow,
Teach thou this sorrow how to make me die !”

And in an agony of wounded pride she threw herself on the ground, and wept bitterly.

“ In an agony of wounded pride she threw herself on the ground.”

Hardly had the marriage between the dauphin and Blanch of Castile been solemnized than Pandulph, the legate of the Pope, appeared, demanding of King John how he dared keep Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, from his see, thus rebelling against the command of Innocent, the Sovereign Pontiff.

The English king had sworn before, and now declared again,

that Stephen Langton should not "take tithe or toll" in his dominions; so the legate pronounced against him the sentence of excommunication, as a disobedient and rebellious son of Holy Church; whereat Constance loudly rejoiced.

Pandulph next called upon King Philip to make John feel the power of France, if he remained obstinate in refusing submission to the Pope. As Philip hesitated, his son, the dauphin, urged him to give up the friendship of England, rather than incur the displeasure of Rome; but the king was loath to relinquish the recently arranged peace, and, turning to the cardinal, exclaimed,—

" Oh, holy sir,
My reverend father, let it not be so !
Out of your grace, devise, ordain, impose
Some gentle order ; and then we shall be blessed
To do your pleasure, and continue friends."

But Pandulph was not so to be moved, and with authoritative voice he cried,—

" Therefore, to arms ! be champion of our Church,
Or let the Church, our mother, breathe her curse,
A mother's curse, on her revolting son.
France, thou mayst hold a serpent by the tongue,
A chafed lion by the mortal paw,
A fasting tiger safer by the tooth,
Than keep in peace that hand which thou dost hold."

This command had great power over Philip, and he yielded to it, declaring that he relinquished the friendship of the King of England; so they took to arms again, and in the first encounter

John seized the person of his young nephew Arthur, and conveyed him as a prisoner to his camp, placing him under the strict watch of one of his lords named Hubert.

Great was the grief of Philip of France when he found the battle was lost to him, Angiers taken, and Arthur made prisoner; but it was as nothing compared with the grief of the Lady Constance, who seemed as one distracted.

Pandulph, the cardinal, strove in vain to soothe her, telling her that her speech savoured more of madness than of sorrow.

“I am not mad: I would to Heaven I were!
For then 'tis like I should forget myself”—

she cried. Then King Philip told her she appeared as fond of cherishing her grief as she had been of cherishing her son.

Such words could have no power in a sorrow so intense as that of Constance, and she answered,—

“Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form;
Then, have I reason to be fond of grief?
Fare you well: had you such a loss as I,
I could give better comfort than you do.”

We must now pass to Northampton, whither the poor little prisoner had been conveyed by the command of the inhuman uncle, who had already declared to Hubert that he should have no rest until the boy's life was put an end to.

But so cruel was John of England, that it would not satisfy him unless his young nephew were painfully tortured first; and therefore he had commanded Hubert to put out his eyes with red-hot irons.

In one of the rooms of the castle two attendants were making preparations for this terrible deed; and bidding them await a signal, whereupon they were to rush in and bind the boy, Hubert called his prisoner to him.

“Good-morrow, Hubert,” said the child; then perceiving that his keeper looked melancholy, he asked him why, adding,—

“Methinks nobody should be sad but I.”

His innocent face moved Hubert to pity, and so he still kept silence; but the little prince went on,—

“Are you sick, Hubert? you look pale to-day:
In sooth, I would you were a little sick,
That I might sit all night and watch with you:
I warrant I love you more than you do me.”

With a great effort Hubert now handed him a paper, on which his sentence was clearly written; but Arthur could hardly believe that it would indeed be carried out, and he cried,—

“Have you the heart? When your head did but ache,
I knit my handkercher about your brows,—
The best I had, a princess wrought it me,—
And I did never ask it you again;
And with my hand at midnight held your head;
And like the watchful minutes to the hour,

Still and anon cheered up the heavy time,
Saying, 'What lack you?' and 'Where lies your grief?'
Or 'What good love may I perform for you?'
Many a poor man's son would have lien still,
And ne'er have spoke a loving word to you ;
But you at your sick service had a prince.
Nay, you may think my love a crafty love,
And call it cunning : do, an if you will :
If Heaven be pleased that you must use me ill,
Why then you must.—Will you put out mine eyes?
These eyes that never did nor never shall
So much as frown on you."



"The attendants rushed in with cords to bind the unhappy boy."

Declaring that he had sworn so to do, Hubert stamped on the floor, and the attendants rushed in with cords to bind the unhappy boy, also the heated irons with which his eyes were to be

put out; but Arthur still expected protection from his keeper, and clinging to him, cried,—

“ Oh, save me, Hubert, save me ! my eyes are out
Even with the fierce looks of these bloody men.”

So pathetic were his entreaties, so earnestly did the child plead for himself, that Hubert ordered the men away, and at length promised that his eyes should not be put out: but he said,—

“ Your uncle must not know but you are dead ;”

for well did he understand the vindictive hatred his royal master felt towards his brother's son.

Meanwhile, it had pleased King John to be crowned a second time, thinking thereby to make his seat upon the throne more secure, even though his lords told him it had been superfluous; indeed, the Earl of Salisbury declared that—

“ To guard a title that was rich before,
To gild refin'd gold, to paint the lily,
To throw a perfume on the violet,
To smooth the ice, or add another hue
Unto the rainbow, or with taper-light,
To seek the beauteous eyes of heaven to garnish,
Is wasteful and ridiculous excess.”

While the king was thus conversing with his courtiers, Hubert arrived to say that the young Prince Arthur was dead; but both the Earls of Pembroke and Salisbury looked suspiciously upon their sovereign, as if believing that he had not been guiltless

in the matter. They left the king's presence, resolving to inquire into the cause of the child's death; but even as they departed, a messenger came hurrying in to tell the news of the arrival of the French force under the command of the dauphin. It was ill news to the ears of John, and as he pondered over it Hubert re-entered the apartment, speaking again of the young Arthur's



"While the king was thus conversing with his courtiers, Hubert arrived."

death, and of how all the old men and dames in the street were talking of it; for he desired to make the king think it true, that so he might escape his anger for not executing his sentence on the boy.

Then John cried,—

"Why seekest thou to possess me with these fears?
Why urgest thou so oft young Arthur's death?"

Thy hand hath murdered him : I had a mighty cause
To wish him dead, but thou hadst none to kill him."

Hubert reminded the king of his commands; but John declared it was a bad thing to have about him those who would make his humours a pretext for taking human life; even when shown his own written order, duly signed and sealed, he declared that it would never have come into his mind to rid himself of the child but for Hubert's influence.

Seeing him in this mood, Hubert now ventured to tell his sovereign that Arthur was alive; and on hearing it John bade him hasten and bring back the angry lords, that they might know the truth.

At that very time the poor captive boy was standing on the walls of the castle of Northampton, thinking it would be a happy ending of his sorrows if he had courage to leap from the height. The idea was terrible to him, for he was so young and timid; yet the constant terror in which he had lived since Hubert spared him was hard to bear, for he was always expecting his uncle to discover him, and put him to some cruel death. Then he thought that though the wall was high, the leap might not kill him, and if he reached the ground uninjured, it would be easy to get away to some safe place of hiding; so he sprang from the castle wall, but so terribly was he injured, that he died there upon the hard stones, crying,—

"Heaven take my soul."

By this time the Earls of Pembroke and Salisbury had

reached Northampton, determined on discovering the true fate of the young prince; and when they saw the bruised and bleeding body lying beneath the castle walls, they believed he had been murdered.

Hubert found them there, and in his haste knowing nothing



"The indignant lords pointed to the lifeless corpse."

of what had befallen the child, cried,—“Arthur doth live! The king hath sent for you.”

For answer the indignant lords pointed to the lifeless corpse, charging him with the murder; but Hubert declared that he was innocent, and that, but an hour before, he had left the young prince both alive and well.

King John had by this time reconciled himself to Rome; whereon Cardinal Pandulph, the Pope's legate, undertook to dis-

miss the French troops already landed. But the dauphin would not so easily lay down his arms; and a great battle ensued in which the English fared so badly, that John declared himself sick at heart, and he retreated before the fall of night put an end to the combat. Hated by his nobles, forsaken by his friends, he was of all men the most unhappy, while his conscience was troubled by the remembrance of his many crimes: a fever attacked him, from which he died at Newark Castle, and was buried at Worcester, as he had desired.

XIII.

KING RICHARD II.

HENRY BOLINGBROKE, Duke of Hereford, and Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, sought the presence of their king, each to accuse the other of the crime of high treason. It was the will of Richard II. that they should be confronted, and "face to face, and frowning brow to brow," speak freely.

Bolingbroke was the king's cousin, and he first was bidden to prefer his complaint against the noble Norfolk.

"What doth our cousin lay to Mowbray's charge?
It must be great that can inherit us
So much as of a thought of ill in him."

Then said Bolingbroke, that the Duke of Norfolk had received a large sum of money to disburse among the king's soldiers, but that he had retained it for some ill purpose. Further, that every treason which had been schemed in England had sprung from him, during a long course of years. And, lastly, that he had planned the death of the Duke of Gloucester.

Mowbray of Norfolk indignantly denied each of these charges, and challenged his opponent to a combat; but the king strove to make peace between them, and called upon his uncle, John of Gaunt, who was Bolingbroke's father, to try and calm the passion of his son.

But as all interference seemed vain in restoring friendship between the two angry nobles, Richard bade them both be ready by the festival of St. Lambert, to settle the quarrel with their swords and lances, at Coventry.

Upon the appointed day, a large company assembled at Gosford Green, near Coventry, to view the combat. A throne had been there erected for King Richard, and, as a herald ushered in the Duke of Norfolk, he bade the lord marshal proceed in an orderly way, by inquiring in what cause Mowbray was about to fight. Then cried the noble,—

“ My name is Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk ;
Who hither come engagèd by my oath—
Which God defend a knight should violate !—
Both to defend my loyalty and truth
To God, my king, and his succeeding issue,
Against the Duke of Hereford that appeals me ;
And, by the grace of God and this mine arm,
To prove him, in defending of myself,
A traitor to my God, my king, and me :
And as I truly fight, defend me Heaven ! ”

Having thus spoken he sat down, and another trumpet sounded, which heralded the approach of Henry Bolingbroke.

He also was called upon to state the cause for which he fought.
And thus he answered:—

“ Harry of Hereford, Lancaster, and Derby
Am I ; who ready here do stand in arms,
To prove, by God’s grace and my body’s valour,
In lists, on Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk,
That he is a traitor, foul and dangerous,
To God of heaven, King Richard, and to me ;
And as I truly fight, defend me Heaven ! ”

Then he stepped forward, bowing low before the king, and bidding him farewell, lest he might fall by Mowbray’s sword ; to his father, John of Gaunt, he turned, craving his blessing ; and so made himself ready.

Mowbray of Norfolk now approached the king, declaring himself his majesty’s faithful servant, whether conqueror or vanquished ; and he added that he should engage in the encounter as blithely as if it were a sport, for “ Truth hath a quiet breast.”

Both nobles had taken lance in hand, when the king stayed them, and forbidding them to fight, pronounced sentence of banishment on both.

“ You, cousin Hereford, upon pain of life,
Till twice five summers have enriched our fields,
Shall not regret our fair dominions,
But tread the stranger paths of banishment.”

Upon Norfolk a still heavier doom rested.

"The sly slow hours shall not determinate
The dateless limit of thy dear exile;
The hopeless word of 'Never to return'
Breathe I against thee, upon pain of life."

The duke felt that it was a hard sentence. For forty years

"Both nobles had taken lance in hand, when the king stayed them."

he had lived, knowing no other home than England, no other tongue than that spoken on its shore, and he cried,—

"What is thy sentence then but speechless death,
Which robs my tongue from breathing native breath?"

King Richard, for the sake of his uncle, John of Gaunt, took four years off the number during which his cousin Bolingbroke

was to be an exile; but he felt his punishment keenly, and exclaimed,—

“Then, England’s ground, farewell; sweet soil, adieu;
My mother, and my nurse, that bears me yet!
Where’er I wander, boast of this I can,—
Though banished, yet a trueborn Englishman.”

At that time Ireland was in a state of rebellion, and it was no easy matter to raise money for supporting the troops employed there. While King Richard was considering what to do in this matter, news came to him of the serious illness of old John of Gaunt; and he at once said that his uncle’s lands and revenues would fall in most opportunely to pay the soldiers, if by good fortune he were to die. York, also the king’s uncle, vainly tried to remind him of the claims of the banished Bolingbroke. As soon as the poor old duke had breathed his last, Richard said,—

“Think what you will, we seize in our hands
His plate, his goods, his money, and his lands.”

This done, the monarch set off for Ireland, to the great distress of his queen, who seemed to fear some impending danger. “Some unborn sorrow is coming towards me,” she said; and very soon she heard that Harry of Hereford, at the head of a considerable force, was returning home, ere the term of his banishment had expired, to claim the fortune and estates of his deceased father. Still worse was it to know that many of the nobles, including the Earl of Northumberland and his son Henry Percy, had deserted the king’s standard, and were hastening to join Hereford.

The old Duke of York did his best to muster an army to resist the advancing enemy ; but in the absence of the king his difficulties were great, and he truly said,—

“ All is uneven,
And everything is left at six and seven.”

“ Bolingbroke had reached Gloucestershire with his adherents.”

Bolingbroke had reached Gloucestershire with his adherents, when Lord Berkeley was sent from the Duke of York, asking why he came to take advantage of Richard's absence ; but when called by the name of “ Hereford,” he would not answer, declaring he had come as Lancaster, the successor to his father's title.

The Duke of York was not long in following his messenger ; and Henry Bolingbroke immediately knelt to him, and saluted him as, “ My gracious uncle.”

The old duke, however, was much too angry to receive his courtesy well, and he declared that he was "no traitor's uncle." Henry then put before him the injustice of Richard's conduct in his regard; and the duke was forced to admit that he had been wronged, and at last he said,—

"If I could,.....
I would attach you all, and make you stoop
Unto the sovereign mercy of the king;
But since I cannot, be it known to you
I do remain as neuter."

Meanwhile King Richard, who had heard the news, made haste to leave Ireland; and reaching Wales, comforted himself with reflecting how large a number of loyal subjects still remained to him. But tidings came that the Welshmen had been told he was dead, and had therefore enrolled themselves in Bolingbroke's army; that all the northern castles were given up to him; and that the southern gentlemen of England were of his party.

Richard was thrown into despair at this state of things, and declared he would go to Flint Castle, and in that solitude pine away. When he had retired there in company with the few lords who remained faithful to him, Bolingbroke arrived with his men, and sent to Richard a messenger, saying that he would lay down arms, provided that his sentence of banishment were repealed and his lands restored.

King Richard, knowing the weakness of his position, was forced to promise that he would yield to these requirements; but it grieved him exceedingly to do so, and he said,—

“ What must the king do now ? must he submit ?
 The king shall do it : must he be deposed ?
 The king shall be contented : must he lose
 The name of king ? o' God's name, let it go :
 I'll give my jewels for a set of beads,
 My gorgeous palace for a hermitage,
 My gay apparel for an almsman's gown,
 My figured goblets for a dish of wood,
 My sceptre for a palmer's walking-staff,
 My subjects for a pair of carvèd saints,
 And my large kingdom for a little grave,
 A little little grave, an obscure grave.”

With the mockery of respect, Richard was now conducted to London, where Bolingbroke began an inquiry as to the undiscovered murderer of the Duke of Gloucester, whom he had formerly supposed to be the banished Norfolk.

Aumerle, the Duke of York's son, was charged with the crime, one or two lords deponing to the fact of his having said that his arm was long enough to reach as far as Calais and his uncle's head ; but he would not confess to it, and demanded that Norfolk should be brought back and confronted with him.

Then the Bishop of Carlisle, who was among the lords spiritual there assembled, said :—

“ That honourable day shall ne'er be seen.
 Many a time hath banished Norfolk fought
 For Jesu Christ in glorious Christian field,
 Streaming the ensign of the Christian cross
 Against black pagans, Turks, and Saracens ;
 And toiled with works of war, retired himself

To Italy ; and there, at Venice, gave
His body to that pleasant country's earth,
And his pure soul unto his captain Christ,
Under whose colours he had fought so long."

Now came the ceremony of deposing Richard, and hailing Bolingbroke as King Henry IV.

The Bishop of Carlisle spoke out boldly against this step, crying,—

“ Oh, forbend it, God,
That in a Christian climate souls refined
Should show so heinous, black, obscene a deed !
I speak to subjects, and a subject speaks,
Stirred up by God, thus boldly for his king.
My Lord of Hereford here, whom you call king,
Is a foul traitor to proud Hereford's king,
And if you crown him, let me prophesy :—
The blood of English shall manure the ground,
And future ages groan for this foul act.”

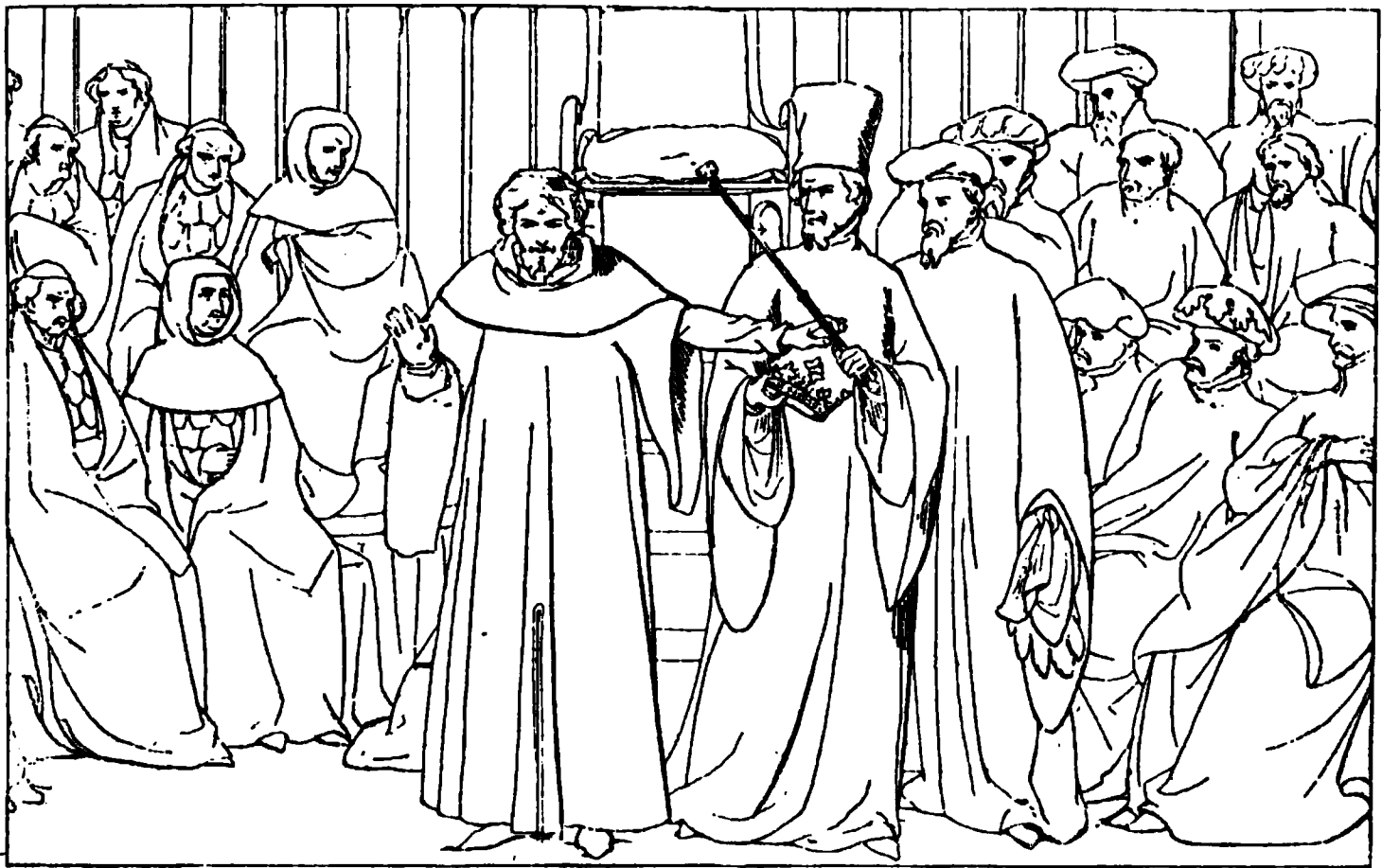
But for saying this he was immediately arrested on charge of high treason ; and then the king was brought in to surrender his crown in presence of all assembled.

There was something very touching in Richard's dejected demeanour, as, taking the emblem of royalty in his hands, he said, “ Here, cousin, seize the crown.”

Bolingbroke answered that he had understood Richard was willing to resign it.

“ My crown I am ; but still my griefs are mine,” was the reply, and then he went on to say,—

"I give this heavy weight from off my head,
And this unwieldy sceptre from my hand,
The pride of kingly sway from out my heart:
With mine own tears I wash away my balm,
With mine own hands I give away my crown,
With mine own tongue deny my sacred state,

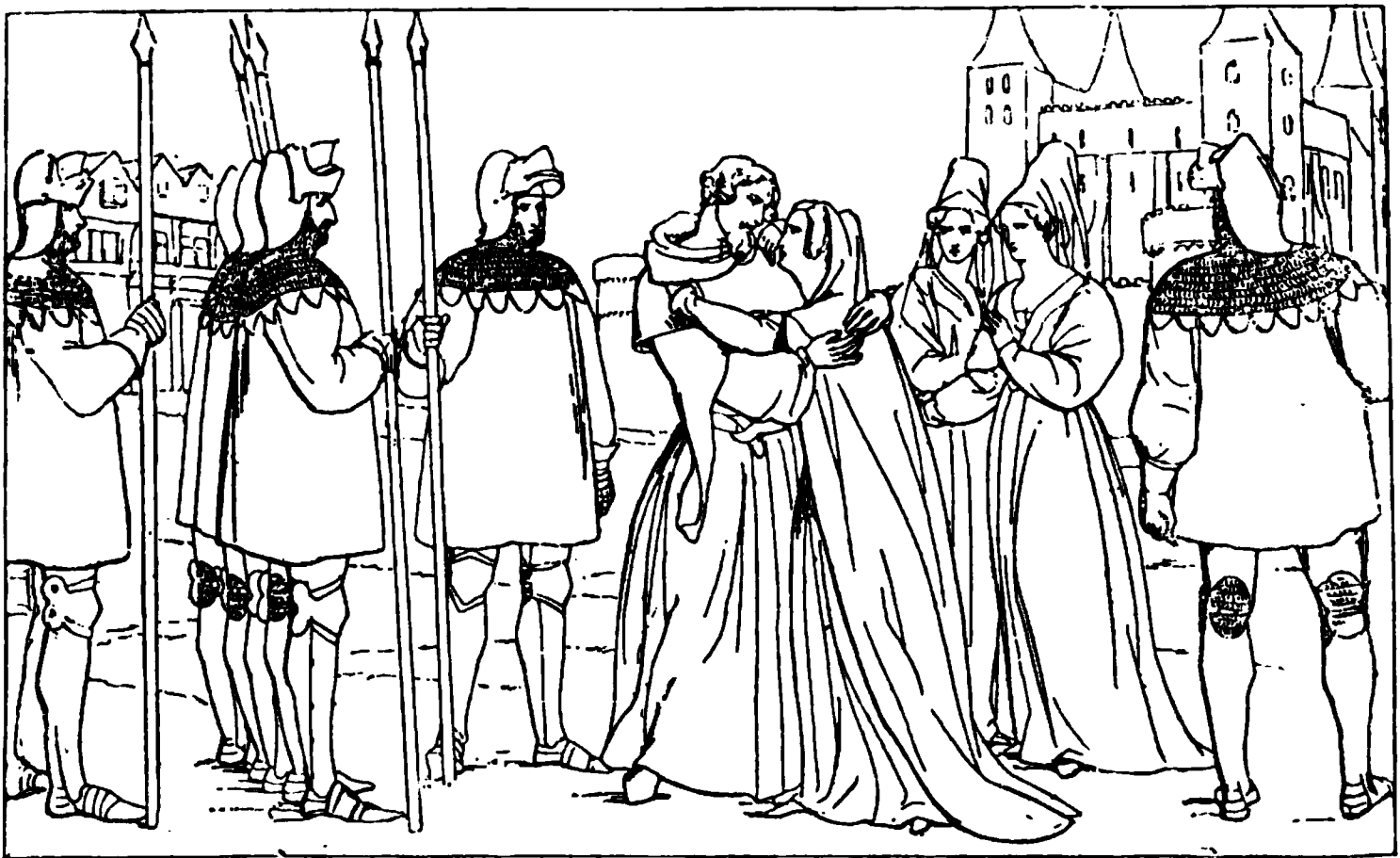


"The king was brought in to surrender his crown."

With mine own breath release all duty's rites:
All pomp and majesty I do forswear;
My manors, rents, revenues I forego;
My acts, decrees, and statutes I deny:
God pardon all oaths that are broke to me!
God keep all vows unbroke that swear to thee!
Make me, that nothing have, with nothing grieved,
And thou with all pleased, that hast all achieved!

Long mayst thou live in Richard's seat to sit,
And soon lie Richard in an earthy pit!
God save King Harry, unkinged Richard says,
And send him many years of sunshine days!"

It would seem that he could not have more deeply humbled himself, yet a paper was now put into Richard's hands, setting



"Richard's queen had placed herself in the street through which he had to pass."

forth all the different wrongs he and his followers had ever committed, that so it might be proved that he was justly deposed; and when this had been read, he was ordered to the Tower.

Richard's unhappy queen had placed herself, with her ladies, in the street through which he had to pass; but suddenly the mind of Bolingbroke changed, and he ordered the ex-monarch to

Pontefract, otherwise called Pomfret, Castle instead, while his queen was sent to France.

Vainly did the poor lady plead, "Whither he goes, thither let me go." They were forced to part, and Richard murmured:—

"Weep thou for me in France, I for thee here;
Better far off than, near, be ne'er the near.
Go, count thy way with sighs; I mine with groans."



"Exton killed the late king with his sword."

In the lonely castle of Pomfret was the poor dethroned king now confined, and there he received news of the gay doings in London upon Henry the Fourth's coronation-day. While he listened, and heard also how his own horse had carried the new sovereign, stepping proudly beneath his burden, the keeper came in with a covered dish, and asked Richard to eat.

"Taste of it first, as thou art wont to do," replied Richard; but the man declared that Sir Pierce Exton, the new governor of the castle, had forbidden him to do so.

Many insults, many trials had fallen to Richard's share, and now he felt he could endure no more. Letting his passion have way, he struck the man, whose cries brought in the governor and some armed servants. In the tumult which ensued, Exton killed the late king with his sword; and believing that Henry IV. would rejoice, conveyed his coffin into the royal presence.

But Henry did not rejoice as Exton expected. Though he had heartily desired the death of Richard, he was alarmed by the crime thus committed, and declared his purpose of going on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, as an act of penance for the share he had borne in it.

XIV.

KING HENRY IV.



YEAR had gone by since Henry IV. of England first purposed a journey to Palestine—

“To chase these pagans in those holy fields
Over whose acres walked those blessed feet
Which, fourteen hundred years ago, were nailed
For our advantage on the bitter cross.”

But he had been delayed by different causes, and now waited with some impatience to hear what had been arranged by his privy council to forward the expedition.

To him there came the Earl of Westmoreland, saying, that while assembled to confer upon this matter, the lords had received news from Wales; and that Mortimer, in leading the men of Herefordshire to fight against Owen Glendower, was himself taken prisoner. Henry immediately asked if this would interfere with the business in the Holy Land.

“This, matched with other did, my gracious lord,”

replied Westmoreland, proceeding to tell that there were even worse tidings from the north ; for Harry Hotspur was engaged in battle there, the issue of which was not yet known.

King Henry had already received the account of Hotspur's success in making several of the Scottish earls prisoners ; which Westmoreland declared was a conquest of which a prince might fairly boast.

In another room of the palace young Henry, the king's son, was talking with Sir John Falstaff, who was one of his favourite companions. Very wild and riotous was the prince in those days, thereby causing great grief to his royal father ; in thinking how different was the son of the Earl of Northumberland, he said that he could not but envy him as—

“ The father to so blest a son,—
A son, who is the theme of honour's tongue.”

While Prince Henry was amusing himself with Falstaff, they were joined by another of his gay friends, proposing a scheme such as would amuse them all. “ My lads, my lads, to-morrow morning, by four o'clock, early at Gadshill ! There are pilgrims going to Canterbury with rich offerings, and traders riding to London with fat purses : I have vizards for you all ; you have horses for yourselves.”

Harry Madcap was ever ready for sport, yet this plan of highway robbery did not please him. Remembering that he was a king's son, he exclaimed, “ Who, I rob ? I a thief ? not I, by my faith.”

Sir John Falstaff tried in vain to change his mind, so he left

Poins to see if he had more influence over the prince; for Poins had said, "Sir John, I prithee, leave the prince and me alone: I will lay him down such reasons for this adventure that he shall go."

In the end young Henry was persuaded; but, when left alone, he began thinking that some time he would give up his reckless way of life,—

"And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes."

Much as the king had admired the brave Harry Percy, usually called Hotspur, he became angry when required by him to redeem Mortimer, who had fallen into the hands of Owen Glendower. He cried,—

"No, on the barren mountains let him starve;
For I shall never hold that man my friend
Whose tongue shall ask me for one penny cost
To ransom home revolted Mortimer."

Hotspur was indignant to hear this epithet applied to his friend,—the brother of his wife,—and he answered,—

"Revolted Mortimer!
He never did fall off, my sovereign liege,
But by the chance of war."

It was, however, useless to oppose the king, who bade him henceforth never mention the name of Mortimer in his presence.

This difference was the cause of both the Percies, father and son, becoming the king's enemies; and Hotspur joined his army to Glendower and the Scots against Henry.

The tidings of this desertion alarmed the king, and he sent a messenger to find his wild son, and command him, in his name, to appear at the court upon the following day.



"Enacting an imaginary scene."

Madcap Harry was discovered among a company of youths as giddy as himself, who were hiding in a tavern in Eastcheap; and for the rest of the evening they amused themselves in enacting an imaginary scene between their prince and his father upon the coming day.

When young Henry was admitted to the king's presence, he received at first a severe rebuke for his many follies:—

“ I know not whether God will have it so,
For some displeasing service I have done,
That, in his secret doom, out of my blood
He'll breed revengement and a scourge for me ;
But thou dost in thy passages of life
Make me believe that thou art only marked
For the hot vengeance and the rod of Heaven
To punish my mistreadings. Tell me else,
Could such inordinate and low desires,
Such poor, such bare, such lewd, such mean attempts,
Such barren pleasures, rude society,
As thou art matched withal and grafted to,
Accompany the greatness of thy blood,
And hold their level with thy princely heart ? ”

Henry tried to excuse himself on the score of his youth ; and at last said,—

“ I shall hereafter, my thrice gracious lord,
Be more myself.”

The purpose of the king in desiring this interview had been to discover whether his thoughtless son was ready to fight for him against his enemies ; but he said,—

“ Thou that art like enough,—through vassal fear,
Base inclination, and the start of spleen,—
To fight against me under Percy's pay,
To dog his heels and curtsy at his frowns,
To show how much thou art degenerate.”

This taunt roused the spirit of the young prince, and he cried,—

“ Do not think so ; you shall not find it so :
And God forgive them that so much have swayed
Your majesty’s good thoughts away from me !
I will redeem all this on Percy’s head,
And, in the closing of some glorious day,
Be bold to tell you that I am your son.”

Ere Prince Harry went to battle, he summoned his friend Falstaff to accompany him to Shrewsbury, where the rebels had encamped. When the news of the king’s arrival had reached Hotspur and his companions, they professed themselves quite ready to fight ; but Sir Walter Blunt appeared, bearing the message of royalty :—

“ The king hath sent to know
The nature of your griefs ; and whereupon
You conjure from the breast of civil peace
Such bold hostility, teaching his duteous land
Audacious cruelty. If that the king
Have any way your good deserts forgot,
Which he confesseth to be manifold,
He bids you name your griefs ; and with all speed
You shall have your desires with interest
And pardon absolute.”

Well-sounding was the offer, but Hotspur mistrusted it, and, for himself, his father and uncle, declared they would not sue the king’s favour.

A battle took place upon a plain near Shrewsbury, in which Hotspur fell by the hand of the young Prince Harry, and victory was in the hands of the king’s party.

This success emboldened Henry IV. to despatch a portion of

his troops still further north, where an army was being raised against him, while he and his son commanded another party to fight with Glendower in Wales, and thus put an end to the rebellion.

After a time there was a cessation of hostilities, and the king returned to London, where Prince Henry again gave himself up



"While he slept, Madcap Harry came and sat beside him."

to every kind of folly, led on by the example of the companions he had chosen.

But the health of Henry IV. began to fail, and he was often attacked by fits. At one such time he had been carried to his bed, and the crown laid on his pillow at his own request; and while he slept, Madcap Harry came and sat beside him. The sight of the crown set him thinking of the many cares and

sorrows attendant upon royalty. "O polished perturbation! golden care!" he exclaimed; and believing his father's heavy sleep was the sleep of death, he placed the crown upon his own head, declaring he would guard it well, remembering from whom he had received it; and thus saying he left the apartment.

In this the prince was mistaken, for the king awoke, and calling loudly for his attendants, asked who had taken the crown from his pillow. When young Henry was summoned, he said,—

"I never thought to hear you speak again."

But the monarch was deeply hurt by his thoughtless act, and answered,—

"Thy wish was father, Harry, to that thought:
I stay too long by thee, I weary thee.
Dost thou so hunger for mine empty chair,
That thou wilt needs invest thee with my honours
Before thy hour be ripe?"

With tears the young prince declared that he had felt no rejoicing at the prospect of being a king; he described what his thoughts had been on regarding that sign of royalty, and added,—

"But if it did infect my blood with joy,
Or swell my thoughts to any strain of pride;
If any rebel or vain spirit of mine
Did with the least affection of a welcome
Give entertainment to the might of it,
Let God for ever keep it from my head,
And make me as the poorest vassal is
That doth with awe and terror kneel to it!"

This reply seemed to awaken all the affection of the king's heart towards his son, and he acknowledged that he had been harsh in his judgment. He also said that he had won the crown by crooked ways, and thus had well deserved the many sorrows and anxieties of his reign ; and exclaiming,—



"The young prince declared he had felt no rejoicing at the prospect of being king."

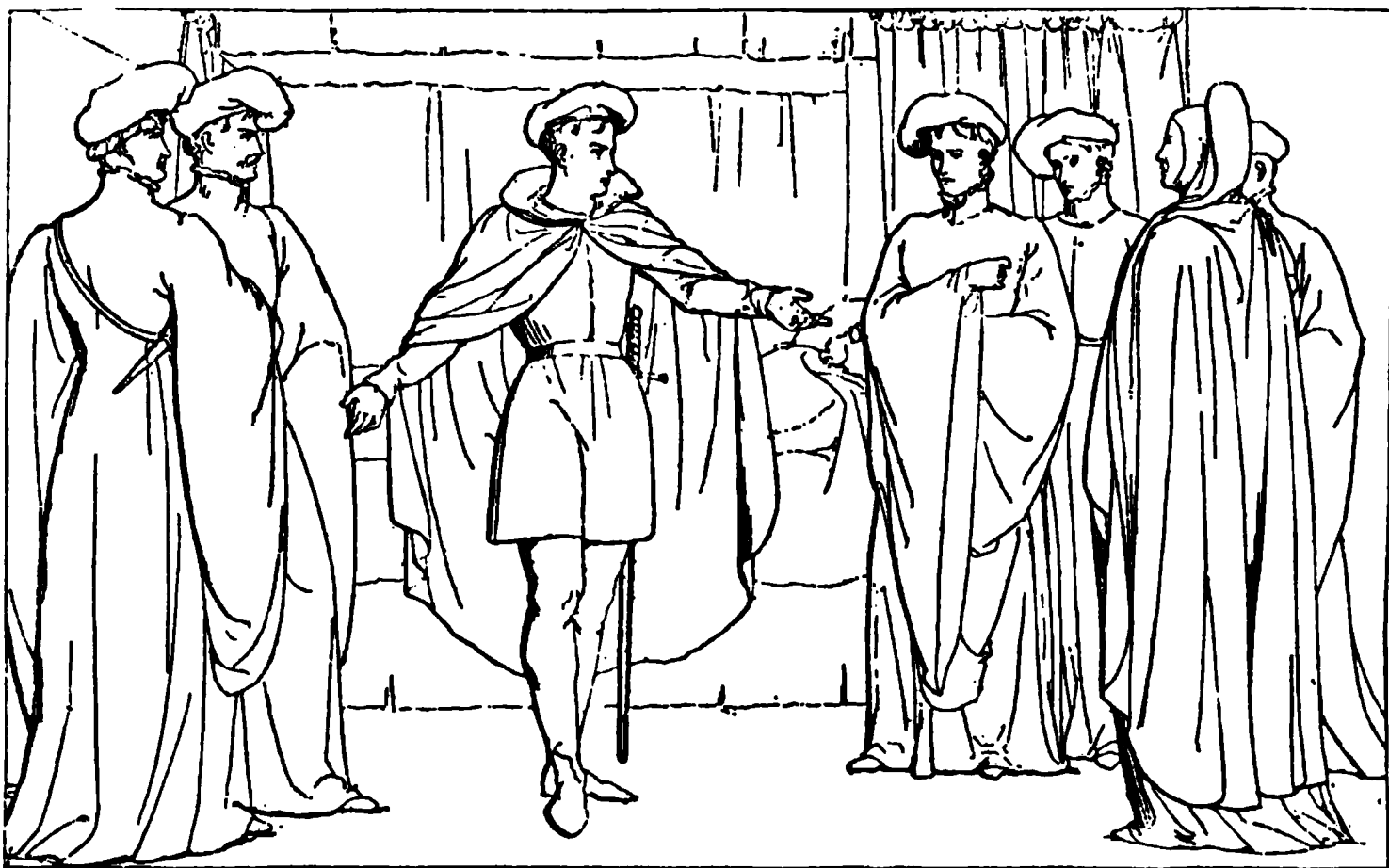
"How I came by the crown, O God forgive ;
And grant it may with thee in true peace live !"—

soon after expired.

The wild young prince now became as sober and wise as his father could have desired ; and one of his first acts was to make Sir William Gascoigne his chief adviser. As in Harry's riotous days this wise judge had once committed him to prison, to show

that offences against law were punished in the royal family as justly as among people of lower degree, many thought that the new-made king would cherish resentment towards Gascoigne in consequence. But such was not the disposition of the sovereign, and thus he addressed the Lord Chief Justice:—

“ So shall I live to speak my father’s words :
‘ Happy am I, that have a man so bold,



“ One of his first acts was to make Sir William Gascoigne his chief adviser.”

That dares do justice on my proper son ;
And not less happy, having such a son,
That would deliver up his greatness so
Into the hands of justice.’—You did commit me :
For which, I do commit into your hand
The unstained sword that you have used to bear ;
With this remembrance, that you use the same

With the like bold, just, and impartial spirit
As you have done 'gainst me. There is my hand.
You shall be a father to my youth :
My voice shall sound as you do prompt mine ear,
And I will stoop and humble my intents
To your well-practised wise directions."

XV.

KING HENRY V.



WHEN Henry V. had ruled some time in England, he bethought him of the claim of Edward III. to the French crown; and resolving to revive it, sent this message by the Duke of Exeter to the King of France:—

“ Thus he greets your majesty.
He wills you, in the name of God Almighty,
That you divest yourself, and lay apart
The borrowed glories that by gift of Heaven,
By law of nature and of nations, 'long
To him and to his heirs; namely, the crown
And all wide-stretch'd honours that pertain
By custom and the ordinance of times
Unto the crown of France.”

The French dauphin desired nothing more than a war with England, and but a little time before, in response to Henry's claim of several dukedoms, had sent him a load of tennis-balls, in reference to the love of amusement which had distinguished his early days. He now declared that if his father sent a fair

reply to the demand of the English king, it would be quite against his will.

With a formidable army Henry left Southampton ; and entering the mouth of the river Seine, attacked the strong fortress of Harfleur, urging on his men with the cry,—“ God for Harry, England, and Saint George !”

“ God for Harry, England, and Saint George !”

For five weeks the town held out against the besiegers. But at last there came a day when they were forced to surrender ; and the governor said,—

“ Therefore, great king,
We yield our town and lives to thy soft mercy.
Enter our gates ; dispose of us and ours ;
For we no longer are defensible.”

After this victory the French king sent this message to Henry, by Mountjoy, a herald of his court:—"Say thou to Harry of England: Though we seemed dead, we did but sleep: advantage is a better soldier than rashness. Tell him we could have rebuked him at Harfleur, but that we thought not good to bruise an injury till it were full ripe: now we speak upon our cue, and our voice is imperial: England shall repent his folly, see his weakness, and admire our sufferance."

Henry's army had suffered great losses; but he was not intimidated by these threats, and sent a message setting forth that though in such condition he would not seek a battle, he would, nevertheless, not shun one. He therefore led on his men, crossing the river Somme, and so approached Agincourt, where some hundred thousand French awaited him.

Henry was well aware that the chances were fearfully against him and to the Duke of Gloucester he said,—

" 'Tis true that we are in great danger ;
The greater therefore should our courage be."

Begging his lords to leave him, he remained alone a while, and thus prayed:—

" O God of battles ! steel my soldiers' hearts ;
Possess them not with fear ; take from them now
The sense of reckoning, if the opposèd numbers
Pluck their hearts from them. Not to-day, O Lord,
Oh, not to-day, think not upon the fault
My father made in compassing the crown !
I Richard's body have interrèd new ;

And on it have bestowed more contrite tears
Than from it issued forc'd drops of blood."

He was aroused by Gloucester telling him that day-dawn called them to the affray; and, riding out to encourage his small army, was accosted by the French herald with a message from the Constable of France, asking him if he would compound for peace rather than rush to a certain overthrow.

Henry desired to make no friendly overtures; and leading on his men, he fought all day in the thickest of the battle, but escaped unhurt and victorious; while the constable and eleven thousand of the French army fell. When the herald Mountjoy sought the English king again, it was to crave permission to search the battle-field and convey thence the bodies of the slain.

When assured of victory, Henry said,—

"What is this castle called that stands hard by?"

Being told it was the castle of Agincourt, he declared,—

"Then call we this the field of Agincourt,
Fought on the day of Crispin Crispianus."

When the list of slain and wounded was brought to him, and he saw how comparatively small had been his own loss, Henry cried,—

"O God, thy arm was here;
And not to us, but to thy arm alone,
Ascribe we all!—When, without stratagem,
But in plain shock and even play of battle,
Was ever known so great and little loss

On one part and on th' other?—Take it, God,
For it is none but thine!”

Returning to England, a glad welcome awaited the triumphant king. The beach was lined with men, women, and children, waving banners and shouting with joy; and—

“ His lords desire him to have borne
His bruised helmet and his bended sword
Before him through the city : he forbids it,
Being free from vainness and self-glorious pride :
Giving full trophy, signal, and ostent,
Quite from himself to God.”

Two years later saw Henry again in France, gaining so many and so great victories that he was able to make his own terms of peace. One of these conditions was that the hand of Katharine, the French princess, should be given him in marriage; and we must imagine an illustrious party assembled in the palace of Troyes in Champagne, where this union was being arranged, and peace thereby concluded and strengthened. Queen Isabel, in bidding Henry welcome, said that though his eyes had been turned with angry looks upon the French hitherto, it was her hope that all quarrels should be that day changed to love. The Duke of Burgundy was present, and spoke of the ravages made by war, and how in that fair country the vine had been left unpruned, the hedges untrimmed, and the grass grown high; while “hateful docks, rough thistles, kecksies, burs,” had been the only things which throve. All this had been the result of the recent hostili-

ties; but now a time of peace was at hand, and France would once more flourish.

“ Well then the peace,
Which you before so urged, lies in his answer ”—

said Henry, looking towards the King of France; who accordingly retired with his queen and councillors to consider the con-



“ Princess Katharine was left to talk with her royal lover.”

ditions, while Princess Katharine was left to talk with her royal lover, having her gentlewomen in attendance.

It was not very easy to converse, for she spoke but little English, while the French tongue came awkwardly from Henry's lips; but he told the princess that if she but loved him truly with her “French heart,” he was willing to hear it expressed in broken words. Then Katharine asked him if he thought it

possible she should love the enemy of France. "No; it is not possible you should love the enemy of France, Kate: but, in loving me, you should love the friend of France; for I love France so well that I will not part with a village of it: I will have it all mine; and, Kate, when France is mine and I am yours, then yours is France and you are mine."

"The proposed terms of peace were fully accepted."

Presently the king and queen, with the French and English lords, re-entered the apartment, and it was declared that the proposed terms of peace were fully accepted; for, said the Earl of Westmoreland (addressing his own sovereign),—


"The king hath granted every article:—
His daughter first, and then in sequel all,
According to their firm proposèd natures."

In giving his daughter to Henry, the King of France expressed his hope—

“That the contending kingdoms
Of France and England, whose very shores look pale
With envy of each other's happiness,
May cease their hatred, and this dear conjunction
Plant neighbourhood and Christian-like accord
In their sweet bosoms, that never war advance
His bleeding sword 'twixt England and fair France.”

XVI.

KING HENRY VI.

HEN the English troops had entered France to lay siege to the town of Orleans, Charles the dauphin was hopeless and dispirited; but at length good tidings came by one of his followers:—

“Be not dismayed, for succour is at hand :
A holy maid hither with me I bring,
Which, by a vision sent to her from heaven,
Ordainèd is to raise this tedious siege,
And drive the English forth the bounds of France.”

When Joan of Arc was brought forward, Reignier attempted to personate the dauphin; but she refused to talk with him, declaring that it was to Charles only she must disclose her Heaven-sent mission.

“Dauphin, I am by birth a shepherd’s daughter,
My wit untrained in any kind of art.
Heaven and our Lady gracious hath it pleased
To shine on my contemptible estate :
Lo, whilst I waited on my tender lambs,

And to sun's parching heat displayed my cheeks,
God's mother deign'd to appear to me
And, in a vision full of majesty,
Willed me to leave my base vocation,
And free my country from calamity."

Presently, when she found she had awakened the dauphin's interest and inspired him with renewed hope, Joan displayed the sword with which she meant to fight. The English had made so sure of victory, that they could scarcely believe the tidings that Charles was coming with a powerful army to raise the siege of the town, in the company of a shepherdess maiden, who, by promises of success, had raised his drooping courage, and who now rode among his soldiers armed for an encounter.

The sentinels had deserted one of the gates, and thither Joan led the French troops, driving the English before her, and thus winning the promised victory, which named her in all succeeding time "The Maid of Orleans."

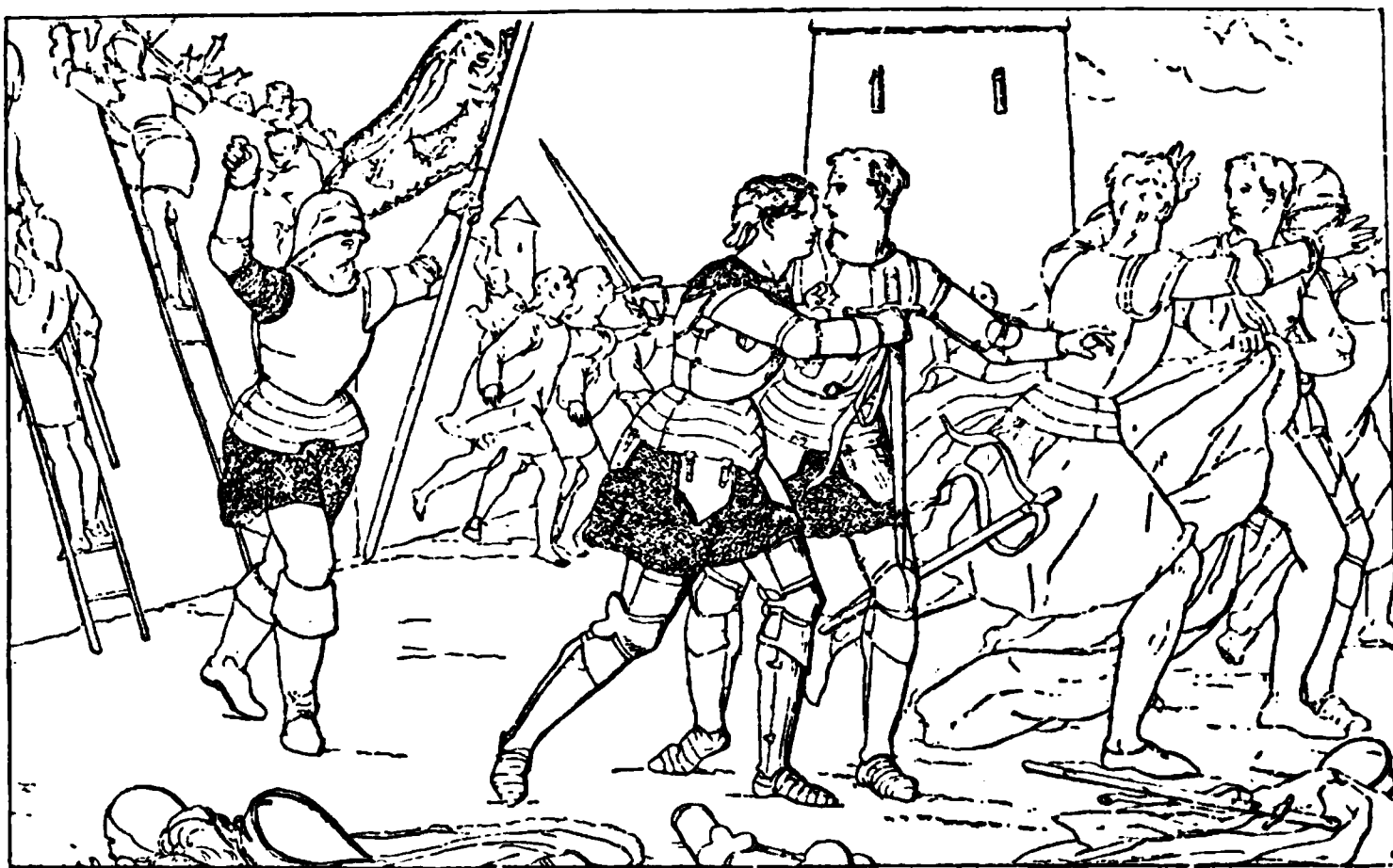
Great were the rejoicings of the dauphin and his friends; and Reignier cried,—

"Why ring not out the bells aloud throughout the town?
Dauphin, command the citizens make bonfires,
And feast and banquet in the open streets,
To celebrate the joy that God hath given us."

But later this joy gave place to lamentation; for in the night the English, finding the French guard asleep, scaled the walls, and re-entered the town from whence they had been so ignominiously driven; at which the dauphin began to reproach Joan, as if she were to blame.

The maid declared that it was the fault of some careless soldier, and that instead of wasting time by inquiring which place had been so weakly guarded, it would rather be wiser to set on foot fresh plans to repair the mischief.

Away in London a different scene was being enacted, in the Temple Garden, where the Earls of Somerset, Suffolk, and War-



"The English, finding the French guard asleep, scaled the walls."

wick were conversing with Richard Plantagenet and others. Both Richard, Duke of York, and Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, were struggling for the protectorship, as Henry VI. showed every day some fresh proof of his unfitness to reign; and each called on those present to declare which side they favoured. Then Richard said,—

“ Let him that is a true-born gentleman,
And stands upon the honour of his birth,
If he suppose that I have pleaded truth,
From off this brier pluck a white rose with me.”

Somerset immediately exclaimed,—

“ Let him that is no coward nor no flatterer
But dare maintain the party of the truth,
Pluck a red rose from off this thorn with me.”

The Earl of Warwick had taken a white rose from the bush, and he prophesied that the disagreement in the Temple Garden—

“ Shall send between the red rose and the white
A thousand souls to death and deadly night.”

Meanwhile in France the brave Maid of Orleans was not idle; and herself disguised, and with some soldiers dressed like countrymen, with sacks upon their shoulders, she entered Rouen; and guided by the flaming torch which she showed from one of the battlements, the French troops easily took the city from their enemies.

The Earl Talbot, who commanded the English forces, declared he would regain Rouen:—

“ And I, as sure as English Henry lives,
And as his father here was conqueror;
As sure as in this late-betrayed town
Great Cœur de Lion's heart was buried,—
So sure I swear to get the town or die.”

It was but a day, and this vow was fulfilled; the French were

routed, and the dauphin was conferring with Joan as to what new stratagem they could have recourse to for recovering the city. It was decided then that the maid should seek a parley with the Duke of Burgundy, and strive to wake in his breast so great a pity for his country, that he would desert the English earl and fight under the standard of the dauphin. So skilfully did Joan plead, that the duke said,—

“ I am vanquishèd ; these haughty words of hers
Have battered me like roaring cannon-shot,
And made me almost yield upon my knees.
Forgive me, country, and sweet countrymen !
And, lords, accept this hearty kind embrace :
My forces and my power of men are yours :—
So farewell, Talbot ; I'll no longer trust thee.”

Henry VI. having been crowned at London, went through the ceremony a second time in Paris ; and it was during his stay there that he heard some of his courtiers wrangling as to the colour of the rose they wore for a badge of party. He charged them then to remember that they were in France, and that it would be unwise indeed should they be heard disputing about a matter of such small importance.

Putting on a red rose, he said,—

“ I see no reason, if I wear this rose,
That any one should therefore be suspicious
I more incline to Somerset than York :
Both are my kinsmen, and I love them both.”

He next made York his regent in France ; and under his skil-

ful conduct of the English troops the famous Maid of Orleans was taken prisoner, while the soldiers fighting under her were wholly routed. It was at this time that Margaret of Anjou was betrothed to Henry of England, upon the condition that Maine and Anjou should be given up to her father, the duke of those provinces. Great was the vexation of York and other nobles at

"The Duke of Suffolk received the fair Margaret as the bride of his royal master."

this concession, and they rightly conjectured that it would result in the entire loss of the realm of France.

In the presence of a large assemblage of princes and nobles in the ancient city of Tours, the Duke of Suffolk received the fair Margaret as the bride of his royal master, and forthwith brought her in state to London, where Henry awaited her.

Although their sovereign was quite willing to lose the two

French provinces in exchange for so fair a queen as Margaret, the English people were discontented; and York deemed his chance of the crown strengthened by their apparent disaffection to Henry.

The new queen was of a proud and haughty disposition, and it vexed her to see the respect in which the Duchess of Gloucester was held as wife to the Protector.

“ Strangers in court do take her for the queen :
She bears a duke’s revenues on her back,
And in her heart she scorns our poverty :
Shall I not live to be avenged on her ? ”

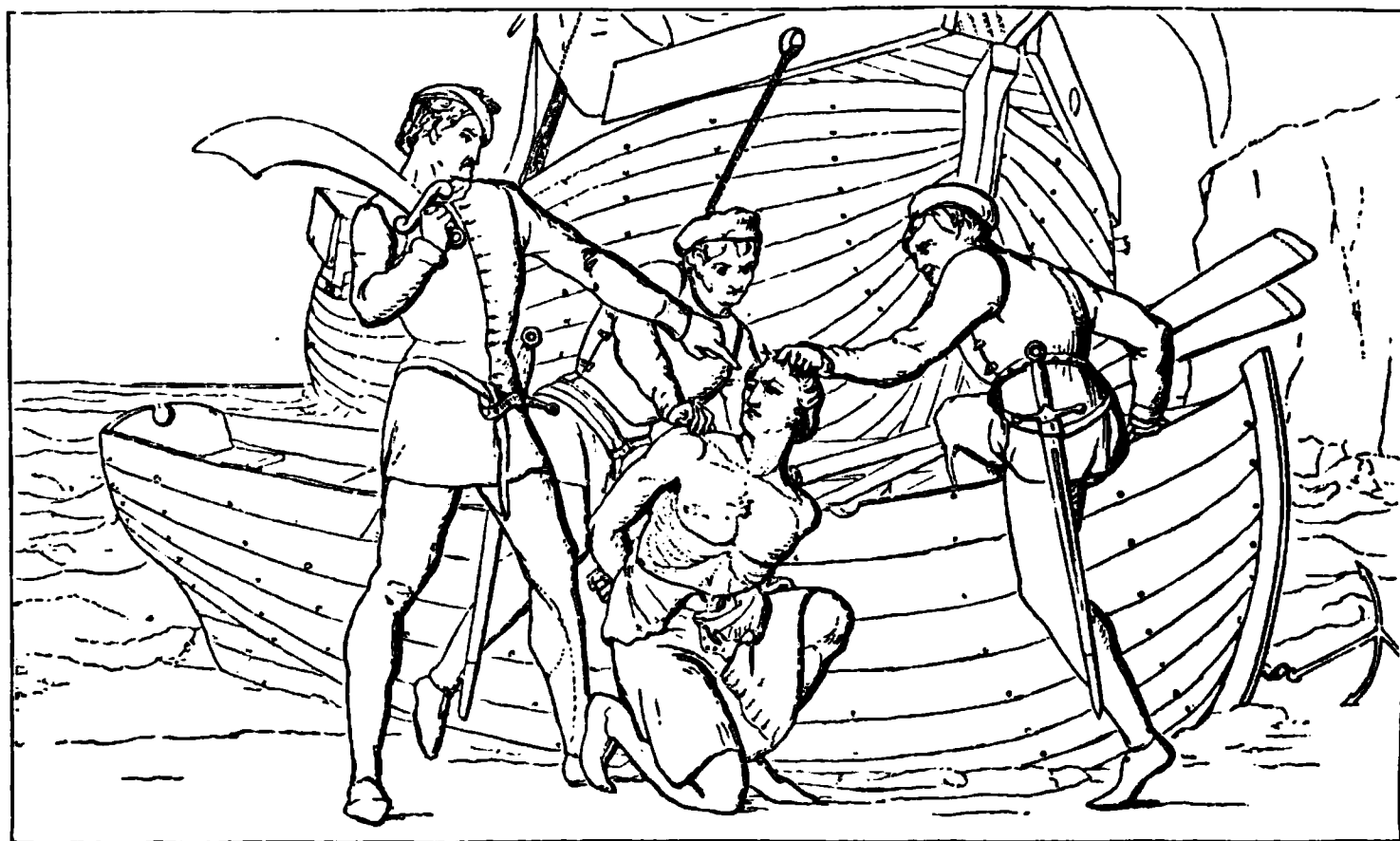
Thus did she complain; nor was it long before she succeeded in getting the duchess disgraced, and the Protector forced to resign his office, for Henry declared himself able to rule his own kingdom.

The Duke of Suffolk next accused Gloucester of treason, whereby the king had lost all his possessions in France; and though he denied all treacherous and unworthy conduct, declaring that in every action he had but sought the welfare of England, his enemies were too strong for him; and having secretly murdered him, they persuaded Henry that he had been found dead in his bed. So deeply did the king grieve for this loss, that Margaret reproached him for loving the duke more than he cared for her. Nor could he disabuse his mind of the fear that he had been murdered, and he cried,—

“ O Thou that judgest all things, stay my thoughts,—
My thoughts, that labour to persuade my soul

Some violent hands were laid on Humphrey's life !
If my suspect be false, forgive me, God,
For judgment only doth belong to Thee."

At the same time, the wrath of the commons of England rose high against Suffolk, as being the one who had made the treaty with the Duke of Anjou which led to all succeeding losses, and



" He was taken prisoner and put to death."

they demanded that he should be banished, else would they show violence to him.

Henry being forced to yield to this expression of feeling, passed sentence accordingly ; and Suffolk left England for Calais. But ere he reached the French coast a war-ship overtook him, and he was taken prisoner and put to death by the angry rebels ;

who forthwith marched to London, which they held for two days, though they were afterwards subdued.

All these troubles so injured the king's naturally weak brain, that for a time York was made Protector; but upon Henry's recovery he lost this office, and his enemy, the Duke of Somerset, regained his former power. It was then that the famous Wars of the Red and White Roses began; and in the first battle, fought at St. Albans, the Lancastrians were worsted.

The king and queen had managed their escape to London; and when York arrived there and demanded the crown, Henry said,—

“Think'st thou that I will leave my kingly throne,
Wherein my grandsire and my father sat?
No: first shall war unpeople this my realm;
Ay, and their colours,—often borne in France,
And now in England to our heart's great sorrow,—
Shall be my winding-sheet.”

But Warwick—the powerful earl called so often “the king-maker”—bade him do right to York, else would he summon armed men to seize him. So Henry proposed that he should be permitted to reign during the remainder of his life, and then Richard should enjoy the kingdom he desired.

Queen Margaret was very angry at this compromise, which deprived her son of all chance of inheriting the crown.

“Pardon me, Margaret;—pardon me, sweet son:—
The Earl of Warwick and the duke enforced me”—

pleaded the timid king.

But Margaret answered him,—

“Enforced thee! art thou king, and wilt be forced?
I shame to hear thee speak. Ah, timorous wretch!
Thou hast undone thyself, thy son, and me.”

So resolved was this proud woman not to submit to the

“The Red Rose triumphed in the battle of Wakefield Green.”

detested York, that she declared she would call out the supporters of Plantagenet and bid them right her son; and she fulfilled her threat, and the Red Rose triumphed in the battle of Wakefield Green, wherein the Duke of York was killed.

Poor King Henry, finding himself scorned by his wife, thus lamented:—

“Would I were dead! if God’s good will were so;
For what is in this world but grief and woe?”

O God ! methinks it were a happy life,
To be no better than a homely swain ;
To sit upon a hill, as I do now,
To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,
Thereby to see the minutes how they run."

While thus musing, he was roused by some one dragging in the dead body of one he had murdered—it was a son who had unknowingly killed his father ; and at the terrible sight the king cried,—

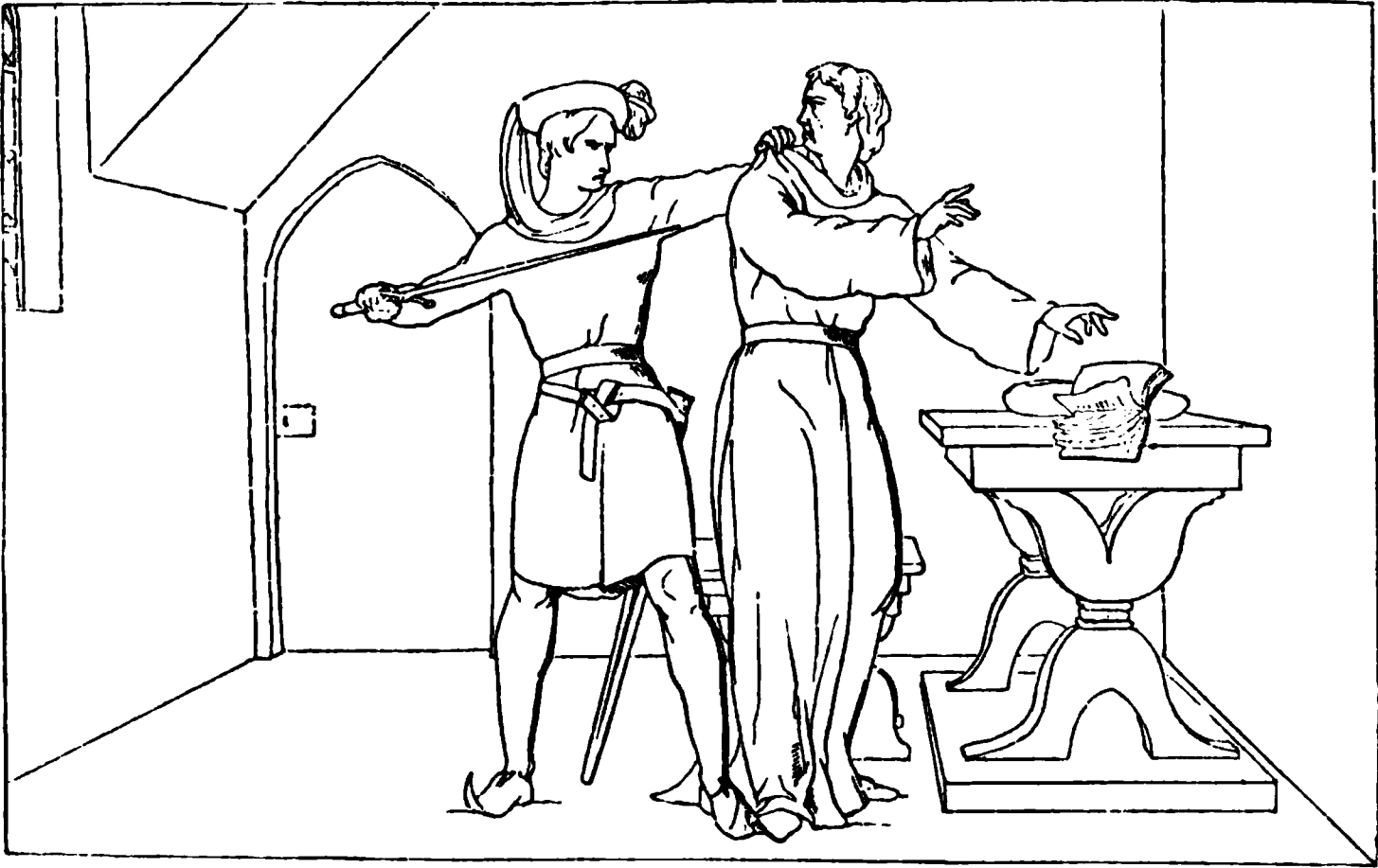
" Oh, that my death would stay these ruthless deeds !"

But the triumph of the house of Lancaster was short-lived, and only the north of England remained faithful to Henry. Margaret's next step was to bear her son to France, and there seek aid from King Lewis.

" Henry, sole possessor of my love,
Is of a king become a banished man,
And forced to live in Scotland a forlorn ;
While proud, ambitious Edward, Duke of York,
Usurps the regal title and the seat
Of England's true-anointed lawful king.
This is the cause that I, poor Margaret,
With this my son, Prince Edward, Henry's heir,
Am come to crave thy just and lawful aid."

When the young Duke of York gave his hand in marriage to Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Richard Woodville, he lost the adherence of the Earl of Warwick, who now joined Queen Margaret in the attempt to dethrone him.

Battle succeeded battle, yet in the end the House of York triumphed. King Henry was conveyed to the Tower, where he



"He died, as is believed, a violent death."

afterwards died, as is believed, a violent death, while of the proud, brave Margaret, Edward, now England's monarch, said,—

"Away with her, and waft her hence to France."

XVII.

KING RICHARD III.

RICHARD, Duke of Gloucester, afterwards King of England, had his mind filled with plots, whereby he might set his brothers Edward the Fourth and the Duke of Clarence at variance. An old prophecy had been spoken, setting forth that King Edward would be murdered by one of his heirs, whose name began with the letter G; and Richard had whispered that this might perchance be his brother George of Clarence. When, therefore, he beheld the duke on his way to the Tower under a strong guard, he was not sorry, though it suited his purpose to feign both regret and surprise.

“What means this armèd guide
That waits upon your grace?”—
he asked.

“And for my name of George begins with G,
It follows in his thought that I am he.
These, as I learn, and such like toys as these,
Have moved his highness to commit me now”—

answered Clarence.

While the crafty Gloucester was thinking over this matter, Lord Hastings came to him, bringing news of the king's illness, which Richard said was indeed grievous to think on; but when left to himself he murmured,—

“He cannot live, I hope; and must not die
Till George be packed with post-horse up to heaven.

“He beheld the duke on his way to the Tower under a strong guard.”

I'll in, to urge his hatred more to Clarence,
With lies well steeled with weighty arguments;
And, if I fail not in my deep intent,
Clarence hath not another day to live.”

Edward's queen was greatly distressed by his illness; and when some of his lords strove to cheer her with hopes of his speedy amendment, she spoke of her fears should he die, knowing

that her son was but a minor, and would for years be subject to Richard of Gloucester, of whom she said,—

“A man that loves not me, nor none of you.”

The hatred of Gloucester was indeed strong against Elizabeth and her family, whom Edward had raised to so high a position, and he had long determined he would be revenged. His first thought, however, was to take the life of Clarence, who stood between him and his chance of succession to the throne; so for this purpose he despatched two men to the Tower, bearing a written order to Sir Robert Brakenbury, the governor, to give the duke into their charge. The ill-fated Clarence was sleeping then; but as he awoke his eyes met those of his murderers, who bade him prepare to die. It was hard to persuade the duke that the king had commanded his death, deeming him a dangerous rival, but almost harder to credit that Gloucester hated him. He said that if it was for gain these men were about to do so vile an act, Gloucester would pay them as well for sparing his life; and he begged them to go to him and—

“Tell him, when that our princely father York
Blessed his three sons with his victorious arm,
[And charged us from his soul to love each other,]
He little thought of this divided friendship :
Bid Gloucester think of this, and he will weep.”

For answer, the murderers laughed at the idea of Gloucester's tenderness, and bade their victim make his peace with God, for he must die. Then Clarence said,—

“ Have you that holy feeling in your souls,
To counsel me to make my peace with God,
And are you yet to your own souls so blind,
That you will war with God by murdering me ? ”

Yet nothing he could say was powerful enough to awaken the pity of these men ; and having stabbed him, one of them threw him into a butt of malmsey wine, thus to end his life and suffering by drowning.

Meanwhile Edward IV., feeling sure that his end was drawing near, wished to reconcile his brother Gloucester to Lord Rivers, and other of the queen's family, and therefore required them in his presence to declare they were at peace. Gloucester most unblushingly professed himself friendly with all men, and said,—

“ 'Tis death to me to be at enmity ;
I hate it and desire all good men's love.”

And then he told of the death of Clarence, pretending that some present were not guiltless in the matter. The tidings, perhaps, tended to hasten the king's death, so that his young son became monarch of England ; and Gloucester at once assumed the place of Protector, feigning the deepest and most loyal affection for Edward V. Under pretence of having him crowned, the boy was brought by his crafty uncle to London ; but while the queen, his mother, was rejoicing at the thought of his arrival, news came to her that Lord Rivers and Lord Grey had been seized and conveyed as prisoners to Pomfret Castle by Richard's order, and she immediately suspected some evil to her young sons.

In alarm Elizabeth fled to the Sanctuary—the refuge for the persecuted built during the reign of Edward the Confessor—a gloomy-looking structure at Westminster, yet strong enough to withstand attack if such had ever been made. Here all were safe; never had the rights of sanctuary been infringed: yet Richard longed to get thence the little Duke of York; for while he remained there in his mother's keeping, his own vile plans were retarded.

Buckingham sought to persuade Richard that it would not be breaking sanctuary to remove the child.

“ You break not sanctuary in seizing him.
The benefit thereof is always granted
To those whose dealings have deserved the place,
And those who have the wit to claim the place :
This prince hath neither claimed it, nor deserved it ;
And therefore, in mine opinion, cannot have it ;
Then, taking him from thence that is not there,
You break no privilege nor charter there.
Oft have I heard of sanctuary men ;
But sanctuary children ne'er till now.”

So Gloucester went to Westminster, and telling the little duke that his brother, the young Edward, was wearying for him, persuaded him to go and bear him company in the Tower, where he was lodged.

Elizabeth most reluctantly saw her second son taken from her under this cunning pretext. Afterwards her longing to see the little king and his brother emboldened her to go with her young daughters to the Tower and seek an interview.

When Brakenbury the governor had received the royal lady with fitting courtesy, he said,—

“ By your patience,
I may not suffer you to visit them ;
The king hath straitly charged the contrary.”

Elizabeth asked whom he might mean by “ the king ;” whereupon he corrected himself, and said it was the Lord Protector, who had given orders that the queen should not be admitted to the presence of her sons.

The poor lady pleaded in vain. And so she could but return to the sanctuary ; but in glancing back at the Tower, she exclaimed,—

“ Pity, you ancient stones, those tender babes
Whom envy hath immured within your walls !
Rough cradle for such little pretty ones !
Rude ragged nurse,—old sullen playfellow
For tender princes,—use my babies well !
So foolish sorrow bids your stones farewell.”

Richard now made his purpose known to Sir James Tyrrel, intrusting him with the murder of the innocent children ; and he readily undertook to have it done, and found two men, named Dighton and Forrest, who for gain were willing to put the little princes to death.

Cruel men as they were, it seems that their hearts were moved to some compassion, for thus Tyrrel reported his interview with them when all was accomplished :—

“ Dighton and Forrest, whom I did suborn
To do this piece of ruthless butchery,

Although they were fleshed villains, bloody dogs,
Melting with tenderness and kind compassion,
Wept like to children in their death's sad story.
'Oh, thus,' quoth Dighton, 'lay the tender babes : '—
'Thus, thus,' quoth Forrest, 'girdling one another
Within their innocent alabaster arms :
Their lips were four red roses on a stalk,
And, in their summer beauty, kissed each other.

" It seems that their hearts were moved to some compassion."

A book of prayers on their pillow lay ;
Which once,' quoth Forrest, 'almost changed my mind ;
But oh ! the devil '—there the villain stopped :
When Dighton thus told on :—' We smothered
The most replenished sweet work of Nature,
That from the prime creation e'er she framed.'—
Thus both are gone with conscience and remorse ;

They could not speak ; and so I left them both,
To bring this tidings to the bloody king."

As Tyrrel thus spoke Richard came in, asking if there was good news for him; and hearing that the poor children were dead, said,—

"Come to me, Tyrrel, soon at after supper,
And thou shalt tell the process of their death.
Meantime, but think how I may do thee good,
And be inheritor of thy desire.
Farewell till then."

When Queen Elizabeth knew that this terrible doom had befallen her two fair boys, she sought Richard, crying,—

"Tell me, thou villain-slave, where are my children?"

His mother, the duchess, also stepped forward, charging him with the murder of his brother Clarence, and saying,—

"Either thou wilt die, by God's just ordinance,
Ere from this war thou turn a conqueror,
Or I with grief and extreme age shall perish,
And never more behold thy face again.
Therefore take with thee my most grievous curse;
Which, in the day of battle, tire thee more
Than all the complete armour that thou wear'st!
My prayers on the adverse party fight;
And there the little souls of Edward's children
Whisper the spirits of thine enemies,
And promise them success and victory.
Bloody thou art, bloody will be thy end;
Shame serves thy life, and doth thy death attend."

Soon after this the popular feeling grew strong against the usurper; and a rising took place, headed by Henry, Earl of Richmond, who desired to unite the rival houses by marrying Elizabeth of York.

There followed the celebrated battle of Bosworth Field, upon the eve of which Richard was haunted by the most miserable dreams, in which he thought he saw the different victims of his cruelty. Awaking, he cried,—

“I did but dream.

O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!
The lights burn blue.—It is now dead midnight.
Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
What do I fear? myself? there's none else by:
Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I.

* * * * *

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.
Perjury, perjury, in the high'st degree;
Murder, stern murder, in the direst degree;
All several sins, all used in each degree,
Throng to the bar, crying all,—Guilty! guilty!
I shall despair.—There is no creature loves me;
And if I die, no soul shall pity me.”

His courage, however, revived in a measure when the drum called him to the battle-field; and with the usual cry of “St. George and victory!” he spurred forward to the encounter. Ere the day went down, his horse was slain beneath him, and he fought his way on foot, crying,—

“ A horse ! a horse ! my kingdom for a horse.”

But in the very act of aiming a death-blow at Henry of Lancaster, Richard was slain ; and his body being conveyed to Leicester, was interred in the church of the Greyfriars.

Then was the White Rose united with the Red by the marriage of Richmond (now Henry VII.) with Elizabeth of York, and peace once more smiled on England.

XVIII.

KING HENRY VIII.

FOR many years had Henry VIII. of England been married to his Spanish wife, Katharine of Aragon, when his fancy was so much pleased with a young lady of the court named Anne Bullen, that he began to think of some pretext by which he might rid himself of Katharine, and thus be wedded to this new favourite. Anne was well pleased with the king's admiration, though when rumours of his separation from the queen began to be whispered in the court, she feigned to pity her royal mistress, and said,—

“ Verily,
I swear, 'tis better to be lowly born,
And range with humble livers in content,
Than to be perked up in a glistening grief,
And wear a golden sorrow.”

The proud and ambitious Cardinal Wolsey was high in Henry's favour at that time, and he suggested that there was some doubt as to whether the marriage with Queen Katharine was strictly legal; and that if illegal, it could be dissolved. The king was

pleased to make much of this opinion, and to see in it ground for permitting him to dismiss Katharine and marry Anne Bullen; so a commission to try the question was obtained from Rome, to which the whole court were called to listen in a hall in Black Friars. Before all that company Katharine knelt at the king's feet, begging to know her fault.

“ Alas, sir,

In what have I offended you? what cause

“ Katharine knelt at the king's feet.”

Hath my behaviour given to your displeasure,
That thus you should proceed to put me off,
And take your good grace from me?”

Turning to Wolsey, Katharine accused him of being her enemy; but in reply he called on the king to declare that he was

not acting in the matter of the separation, but that it proceeded and was warranted by a commission from the entire consistory of Rome. Then the queen cried,—

“ I do refuse you for my judge ; and here,
Before you all, appeal unto the Pope,
To bring my whole cause 'fore his Holiness,
And to be judged by him.”

Leaving the court, Katharine went to her own apartments in the palace at Bridewell, and calling her maidens round her, bade one of them sing, so to divert her mind from its heavy sorrows ; and this was the song which now fell sweetly and soothingly upon the poor queen's ear :—

“ Orpheus with his lute made trees,
And the mountain tops that freeze,
Bow themselves when he did sing ;
To his music plants and flowers
Ever sprung ; as sun and showers
There had made a lasting spring.

“ Every thing that heard him play,
Even the billows of the sea,
Hung their heads, and then lay by :
In sweet music is such art,
Killing care and grief of heart
Fall asleep, or hearing, die.”

Presently Wolsey and another great cardinal sought her majesty, with the intention of persuading her to separate willingly from Henry rather than make her threatened appeal to

Rome. But she refused to make herself appear, as it were, guilty of any wrong whereby she might fitly be divorced; and declaring herself the most miserable of women, exclaimed,—

“ Like the lily,
That once was mistress of the field and flourished,
I’ll hang my head and perish.”

“ I’ll hang my head and perish.”

Up to this time Wolsey had not suspected the king’s affection for Anne Bullen; and upon discovering it he was very indignant, and privately wrote to the Pope, begging him to stay for a time all proceedings for dissolving the marriage with Queen Katharine.

By an accident this letter fell into the hands of Henry, who became exceedingly angry with his former favourite; and sending for the cardinal, thus addressed him:—

“ My father loved you :
He said he did ; and with his deed did crown
His word upon you. Since I had my office,
I have kept you next my heart ; have not alone
Employed you where high profits might come home,
But pared my present havings, to bestow
My bounties upon you.”

Wolsey was surprised, and wondered what all this might mean ; but he answered,—

“ My sovereign, I confess your royal graces,
Showered on me daily, have been more than could
My studied purposes requite ; which went
Beyond all man’s endeavours : my endeavours
Have ever come too short of my desires,
Yet filed with my abilities : mine own ends
Have been mine so, that evermore they pointed
To the good of your most sacred person and
The profit of the state. For your great graces
Heaped upon me, poor undeserver, I
Can nothing render but allegiant thanks,—
My prayers to Heaven for you,—my loyalty,
Which ever has and ever shall be growing,
Till death, that winter, kill it.”

Henry then gave him his own discovered letter, and retired, frowning upon him ; while the nobles who followed in the royal train whispered together and smiled derisively.

When Wolsey understood what was wrong, he knew that his power with the king was at an end ; for the character of Henry was such that he would never pardon any interference with his own plans.

“Nay then, farewell !
I have touched the highest point of all my greatness ;
And, from that full meridian of my glory,
I haste now to my setting : I shall fall
Like a bright exhalation in the evening,
And no man see me more”—

he exclaimed. Nor was it long before this downfall commenced,



“Henry then gave him his own discovered letter.”

by the Duke of Norfolk coming to bid him in the king's name deliver up the Great Seal, and to retire to Esher until the royal pleasure concerning him was made known. After the lords who had borne Henry's message had left him alone, Wolsey took a sorrowful leave of his high position.

“Farewell, a long farewell, to all my greatness !
This is the state of man : to-day he puts forth

The tender leaves of hopes ; to-morrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him ;
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,
And,—when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a-ripening,—nips his root,
And then he falls, as I do. I have ventured,
Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
This many summers in a sea of glory,
But far beyond my depth : my high-blown pride
At length broke under me, and now has left me,
Weary and old with service, to the mercy
Of a rude stream, that must for ever hide me.
Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye :
I feel my heart new opened. Oh, how wretched
Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours !
There is, betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
More pangs and fears than wars or women have :
And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,
Never to hope again."

While thus communing with himself, Wolsey heard the footsteps of his servant Cromwell, who was amazed and distressed by the downfall of the master whose power had been so lately well-nigh boundless. It seems, though, that after the first surprise and humiliation, the cardinal felt that the king's act had wrought him good rather than evil ; for he could see that his worldly greatness had done harm to his soul, and that in losing it he began to taste—

" A peace above all earthly dignities,
A still and quiet conscience."

Then Cromwell told his news:—that Sir Thomas More was made Lord Chancellor in his master's place; that Cranmer was installed Archbishop of Canterbury; and that Anne Bullen had made her public appearance as Henry's queen.

Wolsey now was anxious that Cromwell should enjoy the favour of the monarch, rather than share his changed fortunes; for, said he,—

“No sun shall ever usher forth mine honours,
Or gild again the noble troops that waited
Upon my smiles.”

Unwillingly did Cromwell contemplate a separation from his master; he declared that if he gave his service to the king, his love and his prayers would ever be for the cardinal, who had been so noble and true in his eyes. His words moved Wolsey to weep; but conquering his emotion, he began to advise his servant against those errors into which he had himself fallen, saying,—

“Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition :
By that sin fell the angels ; how can man, then,
The image of his Maker, hope to win by it ?
Love thyself last ; cherish those hearts that hate thee ;
Corruption wins not more than honesty.
Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace,
To silence envious tongues. Be just, and fear not :
Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's,
Thy God's, and truth's ; then if thou fall'st, O Cromwell,
Thou fall'st a bless'd martyr ! Serve the king ;
And,—prithee, lead me in :
There take an inventory of all I have,

To the last penny ; 'tis the king's : my robe,
And my integrity to Heaven, is all
I dare now call mine own. O Cromwell, Cromwell !
Had I but served my God with half the zeal
I served my king, he would not in mine age
Have left me naked to mine enemies."

Soon after this, Katharine of Aragon's marriage with Henry VIII. was dissolved by his desire, so that he might have Anne Bullen crowned his queen ; and in great state that lady was conducted to Westminster, magnificently attired for the ceremony.

Katharine retired to Kimbolton with a few faithful attendants ; but her sorrows caused her to fall sick, and while in this state news was taken to her that Wolsey was dead. Anxious to hear how this had happened, she questioned those about her, and was told that the Earl of Northumberland had arrested the once proud cardinal at York ; and while being conveyed thence to answer the charges brought against him by the king, sudden illness had overtaken him, and, being with difficulty brought as far as Leicester, he was received into the abbey there, and died three nights afterwards,—

" Full of repentance,
Continual meditations, tears, and sorrows."

In relating this, Griffith, who occupied the post of gentleman-usher to the ex-queen, said of Wolsey that—

" His overthrow heaped happiness upon him ;
For then, and not till then, he felt himself,
And found the blessedness of being little :

And, to add greater honours to his age
Than man could give him, he died fearing God."

As Katharine listened, she felt her former dislike to Wolsey change into respect for him in his last hours; and saying she could desire no more faithful friend than Griffith to speak of her after her death, the sorrowful lady asked for music—a sad strain

"Sudden illness had overtaken him."

she already loved and called her "knell." While this was playing she slept, and in sleeping dreamed that she saw bright heavenly spirits smiling upon her and promising her happiness at last.

When she awoke, the watchers marked a change in her features, and believed her end drew very near; but as they whispered of this together, a messenger came from Henry, saying that his majesty was grieved to hear of Katharine's sickness, and

entreated her to be comforted. Well might the much-injured lady say that such a message was as "pardon after execution"—coming too late; but she had prepared a letter of farewell to the king, in which she commended to his care their daughter the Princess Mary, and begged him to secure the welfare of her faithful serving men and women. Having intrusted this letter to the

"An august company had assembled for the christening."

royal messenger, and bidding him tell Henry that in death she blessed him, Katharine asked her maidens to help her to her chamber, where she shortly afterwards drew her last breath.

Some time after this there were signs of unusual rejoicing in the palace at Greenwich, where an august company had assembled for the christening of the Princess Elizabeth, the infant daughter of Henry VIII. and Anne Bullen.

Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, was there to perform the ceremony ; and having knelt, in token of homage, to the king and the royal infant, began to foretell for her a happy and glorious future :—

“ In her days every man shall eat in safety,
Under his own vine, what he plants ; and sing
The merry songs of peace to all his neighbours :
God shall be truly known ; and those about her
From her shall read the perfect ways of honour,
And by those claim their greatness, not by blood.”

